KNIGHTS ERRANT
OF THE
WILDERNESS

LONG

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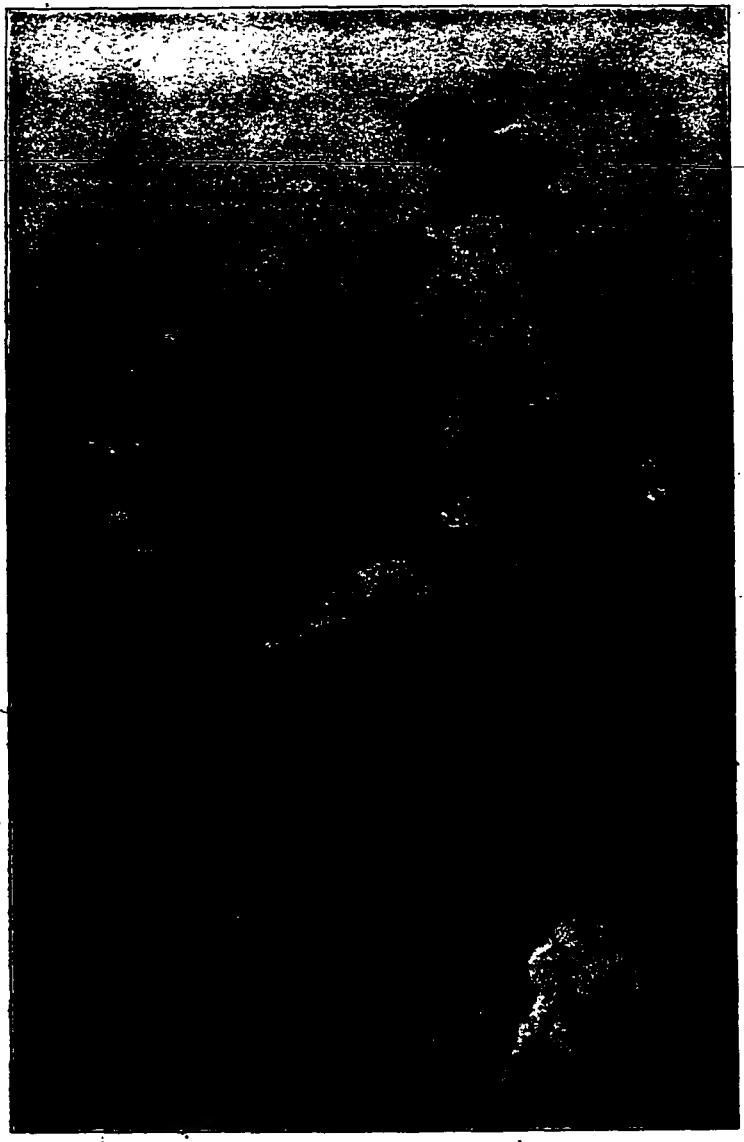

BUFFALO HUNTING ON THE GREAT PLAINS.

KNIGHTS ERRANT OF THE WILDERNESS

TALES OF THE EXPLORERS OF THE GREAT NORTH-WEST

BY

MORDEN H. LONG

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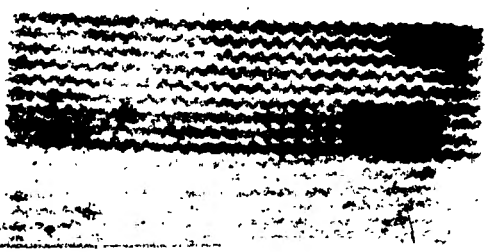

PREFACE

THIS book requires a word of explanation with regard to its character and aim. It makes no pretence whatever to research, but is simply an attempt to re-tell for the children of the upper public school grades some of those stories of the makers of the Canadian West which have already been told for adults in the books of Lawrence Burpee, Agnes Laut, and others. Of the works of these writers very free use has been made in the pages which follow, though where original documents were readily available, as in the cases of the Journals of Hearne and Mackenzie, recourse was had to them. If, then, the book presents in an attractive way for Canadian boys and girls some of the heroic deeds which underlie the growing greatness of their own North-West its object will have been attained. If it should happen that in spite of its simplicity the book makes an appeal, also, to some "grown-ups," that will be a result undesigned by the writer, though no less welcome to him.

The writer wishes to acknowledge the very valuable assistance which he has received at every stage of the work from Miss L. F. Munro, Principal of the Bennett School, Edmonton, and also the kindly encouragement which was afforded him in the undertaking by Mr. John T. Ross, Deputy Minister of Education for the Province of Alberta,

and by Mr. W. G. Carpenter, Superintendent of the Edmonton Public Schools. Grateful acknowledgment is due, too, to Mr. John Wise, for the skill and faithfulness with which he has drafted the maps illustrating the stories.

M. H. L.

EDMONTON,
January, 1920.

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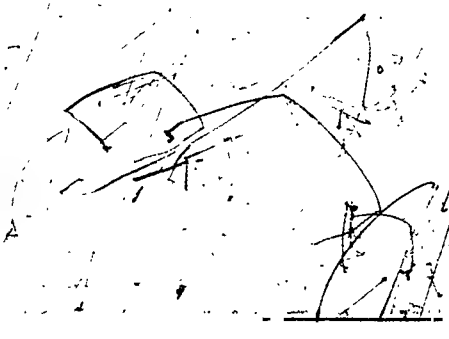
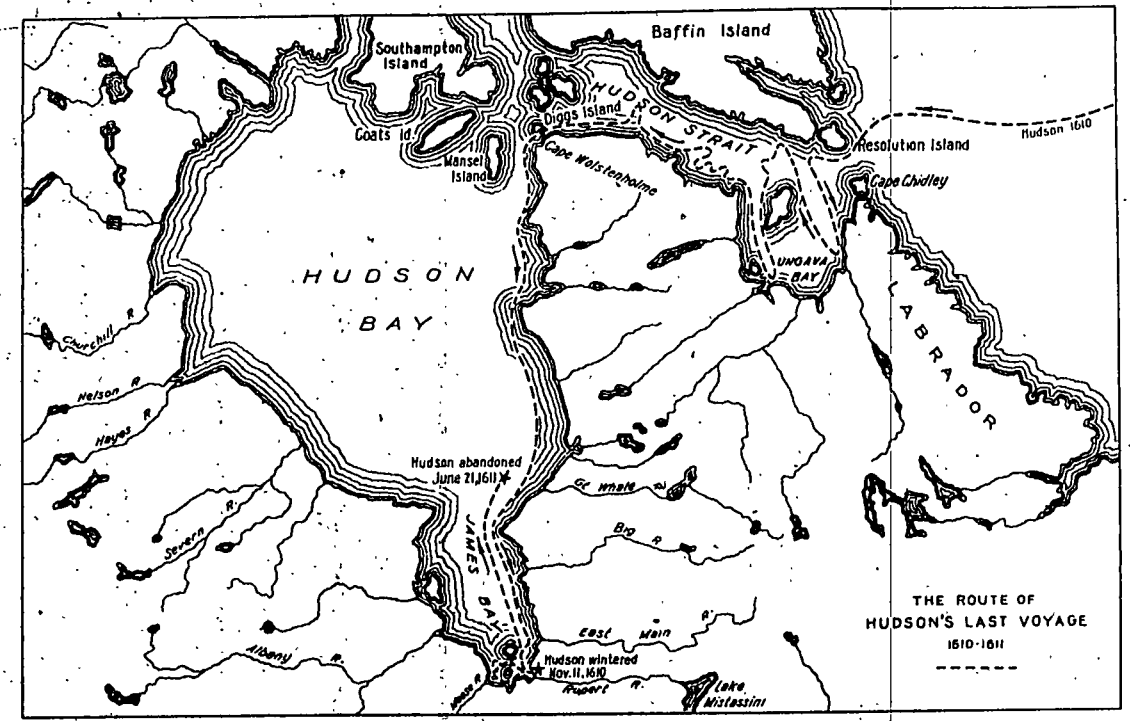
HENRY HUDSON

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KNIGHTS ERRANT OF THE WILDERNESS

EARLY EXPLORERS

CHAPTER I

HENRY HUDSON

In the heart of old London, wedged in among tall houses whose quaint chimney pots look calmly down upon it, there stands the little old Church of St. Ethelburga in Bishopsgate Street. Square and squat and gray, for many a century it has sturdily braved the buffeting storms and has afforded a quiet haven in the city's busy streets, where men may turn aside to think for a little while on the deep things of life.

Thither many a Sabbath morning, to the clear summons of its tolling bell, peaceful citizens of London had gone to worship. On April 19th, 1607, however, there was added to the usual quiet congregation a new, strange element. Just as the service was about to begin twelve men came trooping in. Their bronzed faces, their roughened hands, their free, rolling gait, their sailor clothes, all spoke of a life on the sea far from the cramping bounds of London's shops and counting houses. A little awkward they seemed, as though unused to church and its quiet ways. Yet they

were not irreverent. Their deep voices joined in musically with those of the congregation in the responses of the stately service of the Church of England. Respectfully they listened to the message of the clergyman, and, as they took the holy sacrament, their faces bore the solemn seriousness of men who were about to face hardships and perils and death itself, in some high enterprise.

Little, indeed, did the congregation know that this was the most glorious moment in the long history of the gray old church. Yet so it was, for the little group of twelve strange mariners numbered among it some of the bravest hearts in all England, and their leader, he with the air of command and the steady, fearless eyes, was no other than Henry Hudson, one of the world's greatest navigators. So, simply and with quiet earnestness, did the party prepare itself to carry on the famous search for a northern route to the Indies in which already many skillful and resolute seamen had failed. Thus, too, did the little church witness the memorable beginning of a series of explorations which were to lay for England claims to vast new dominions overseas and bring to Henry Hudson an imperishable fame.

Four days later, at Gravesend on the Thames, Hudson embarked on his first voyage to the icy Arctic seas. His little ship, the *Hopewell*, had been fitted out by the great Muscovy Company, which carried on an extensive trade with Russia by way of Archangel on the White Sea. Along the caravan routes of Central Asia there had come to Russia some of the silks and spices and jewels of the East. Thus

English merchants had been set dreaming of the wonderful wealth that would be theirs, if only a short sea route could be found to India, Japan, and Cathay.

Vasco da Gama, sent out by the king of Portugal, had reached those far distant lands by rounding the Cape of Good Hope and crossing the Indian Ocean. Magellan, dispatched by Spain, had found a way to them by sailing around the southern extremity of South America and boldly striking out across the vast uncharted expanse of the Pacific. But both these routes were very long and beset by many perils. Moreover, Portugal and Spain claimed them as their own by right of discovery and attacked the ships of all other nations which attempted to sail those seas. If English seamen, however, could only discover another and a shorter path to the Far East, that new route would be England's very own, and the merchants of London and Bristol would reap riches untold. So Hudson was now sent forth in his tiny vessel to make his way to those "lands of spicery" by sailing north across the Polar Sea.

With him, in addition to the crew of ten seamen, Hudson took his little son John. Many a time had the lad sat wide-eyed in wonder at his father's stirring tales of distant lands and wild adventures on the seas. Often had he longed for the time when he might throw lessons and school books to the winds and take his part in the brave doings of those days. And now, at last, that time had come, and the little lad was all agog with excitement and eager to be off with his father on his adventurous voyage.

North they sailed past John o' Groat's, the Orkneys, the Shetlands, the Faroes, and Iceland until they were well within the Arctic Circle, where in the short summer reigns almost perpetual day. Then suddenly a dense fog which had beset them lifted. Though it was two o'clock in the morning it was broad daylight, and the watchman's cry of "Land to larboard!" brought the Captain and men tumbling quickly on deck. There, towering above the western horizon and gilded by the rays of the rising sun, were the snowy peaks of the mountains of Greenland, while all about the little ship, to north, east, and south, lay an endless, floating world of ice.

Still north they sailed with the bleak shores of Greenland to the west, until the ever thickening ice fields drove home the fact that no passage lay this way across the Pole. Then, in July, they turned their prow north-east towards Spitzbergen, but here too they found that to north and south the endless ice-packs barred the way to their goal in the East.

So September 15th found Hudson and his crew once more on the Thames at Tilbury Dock. In the main object of their search they had failed, yet the voyage had not been a complete failure. They had proved that no route lay past Greenland or Spitzbergen to the Orient. They brought back definite knowledge of the wealth of the northern seas in whales, seals, and walrus. Hudson had reached the latitude of 82, just eight degrees from the Pole. He had been the first to record the dip of the compass in high latitudes from the true north towards the

magnetic pole. He had also been the first to discover the great Arctic Current setting towards the Pole, which, later, Nansen was to try to use in drifting towards that goal.

But to Hudson failure was only a challenge to the great faith and purpose that inspired him. In the very next year, 1608, he and his son were once more in the north, this time trying to find a passage east through the strait between Nova Zembla and the mainland. But again the great ice barrier and a crew terrified by the hardships and dangers of the quest compelled him to turn back. "Being void of hope," Hudson writes in his log; "the wind stormy and against us, much ice drawing, we weighed anchor and set sail westward." On August 20th they anchored in the Thames.

Cast off now by the Muscovy Company, Hudson was next employed by its great rival, the Dutch East India Company, and the summer of 1609 found him once more off for Nova Zembla. This time he sailed from Amsterdam in a little, flat-bottomed cockleshell of a boat called the *Half Moon*. Unfortunately, more than half of Hudson's crew were cowardly lascars, native sailors from the Dutch East Indies. These men, lightly clad, used only to the sunny southern waters and shivering with cold and terror, took to the warm blankets in their berths when the North Cape had been left behind. Thereupon, the English sailors promptly rebelled against the double work, and all hope of carrying on Arctic exploration for that year at once came to an end. Sadly the captain turned his ship back towards the west.

But if Hudson returned, having once more failed in his search, he knew that his career as a navigator would be ended in disgrace. What was he to do? Whither might he turn? Long he pondered this question, and at last he struck south-west with a fair wind across the Atlantic. Between the French on the St. Lawrence and Virginia, where his friend, Captain Smith, had but lately founded the first permanent English colony in America, old maps showed an unexplored arm of the ocean. Perhaps this was a passage through America to the Pacific or Western Sea, the discovery of which would bring fame and wealth instead of the impending disgrace.

So Hudson and his half mutinous crew coasted south along the Atlantic shore to the Chesapeake, and then turning north again on September 2nd, 1609, their ship entered a spacious harbor at the mouth of a great river. This river we now call the Hudson, after its discoverer. On the lonely wooded shores from which a solitary Indian signal fire then sent its slender smoke column aloft into the air, there towers now the mighty sky-line of New York, the metropolis of America and one of the largest cities in the world.

Little dreaming of the great future of the land which they saw, Hudson and his mariners ascended the river to the neighborhood where Albany now stands. There the Captain was entertained by an old chief of the country. "He was chief of a tribe of forty men and seventeen women," Hudson says. "These I saw there in a house well built of oak bark, circular in shape with an arched roof. It con-

tained a great quantity of Indian corn and beans of the last year's growth, and there lay near the house for the purpose of drying enough to load three ships, besides what was growing in the fields. On our coming into the house two mats were spread to sit upon and food was served in well-made red wooden bowls. Two men were also dispatched at once with bows and arrows in search of game, who soon after brought in a pair of pigeons which they had shot. They likewise killed a fat dog and skinned it in great haste with shells which they had got out of the water. The land is the finest for cultivation that I ever set foot upon in my life. The natives are very good people, for when they saw that I would not remain they supposed that I was afraid of their bows, and taking the arrows they broke them in pieces and threw them in the fire."

On September 23rd the shallows of the upper Hudson caused them to retrace their course to the mouth of the river, and thence, putting forth to sea, they reached Dartmouth in England on November 7th. Hudson had failed again to find the North-West Passage which he sought, but he had discovered a great river destined to be the main gateway to the trade of the New World. So jealous now of their Dutch rivals were the gentlemen of the Muscovy Company that they secured an order from the government forbidding Hudson to return to Holland. Henceforth, they were resolved, his services must be given only to his native land.

On April 17th, 1610, Hudson embarked on his last and greatest voyage. Three members of the Muscovy Company,

Sir Thomas Smith, Sir Dudley Digges, and Master John Wolstenholme, men who had faith in Hudson and his dream of a North-West Passage, joined in equipping the expedition. A little ship of 150 tons, happily named the *Discovery*, was fitted out and manned with a crew of twenty men. Among these were several of Hudson's old seamen and his son John, the constant companion of his father in his voyages.

Dropping down the peaceful Thames with the tide, the little company looked their last on the pleasant land of England, clad in the soft green of April and decked with the flowers of spring. Far other indeed were the scenes for which they were bound.

By mid-May they had reached the rocky coast of Iceland, where, according to Thomas Prickett, one of the members of the crew, who kept a diary of the voyage, "We saw that famous hill, Mount Hecla, which cast out much fire, and on the shore we found an hot spring and here all our Englishmen bathed themselves."

For a fortnight they sheltered in Icelandic coves against adverse winds and drifting ice. Then, sailing boldly to the west, they rounded the southern point of Greenland, crossed the entrance to Davis Strait, and about June 20th reached Resolution Island. This lay at the mouth of the great strait, which both Frobisher and Davis had noticed in their expeditions and through which Hudson was now convinced lay the way to the Western Sea. Here he stood on the threshold of his work. They were upon the edge of the known world and were about to plunge into the vast unknown beyond.

Their task was no child's play. The giant icebergs in the straits of North America were as mountains to little hills compared with the ice floes of the open sea that Hudson had encountered on his previous Arctic voyages. In our own day huge islands of ice, nine miles in length by actual measurement, have been encountered in Ungava Bay. To make matters worse, into the narrow straits and dead against the packed and jumbled ice drifting with the Polar Current south and east, there flings itself the westward sweeping inrush of the Atlantic tide. Thus is created what early navigators called the "furious overfall," a great seething whirlpool of ice and water extremely dangerous to ships.

All through July, Hudson with dauntless courage stubbornly battled his way through the midst of the perils of the strait that now bears his name. Sometimes they slipped down the long lanes or "tickles" of open water between the floes. Sometimes they sought shelter in the calmer water in the lee of some great iceberg. Again, the men had to work desperately in the boats to tow the ship out of some dangerous position, or else, armed with stout, steel-tipped poles, they worked for dear life thrusting away masses of ice that threatened to crush in the sides of the ship. Sometimes, they could make progress only by "worming a way through," that is, anchoring the ship to the floes ahead and then hauling it up to them by pulling on the connecting rope. Often, too, they were compelled to sail north or south, but always they edged ever further and further to the west, where they thought the great goal of the open sea must lie.

In the midst of their toil came some diversions. Often they beheld whales spouting in the distance, and on the floes they sometimes saw great polar bears. Thus one day, Prickett writes: "We raised land to the north and coming nigh it there hung on the easternmost point many islands of floating ice, and a bear on one of them, which from one to another came towards us till she was ready to come aboard. But when she saw us look at her, she cast her head between her hind legs and then dived under the ice, and so from one piece to another, till she was out of our reach."

At last they reached the western end of the strait where two great headlands were seen. The southern one Hudson named Cape Wolstenholme, the northern, Digges Island, and to the latter he sent a landing party. Gaining a footing with difficulty on the rugged coast, the seamen went inland. Deer were seen in abundance, and immense flocks of wild fowl rose in alarm at their approach and circled in the air with loud-flapping wings. They came across little mounds of stone which, Prickett says, upon examination proved to be "hollow within and full of fowls hanged by their necks." These were Eskimo caches containing food for the winter. But best of all — a thing which made every heart beat high with hope — from the hilltop they saw a great sea free of ice spreading out before them to the south-west, far as the eye could reach.

When Hudson heard the good news, without delay he steered the *Discovery* straight for this spacious open water. "At last!" he thought, "I have reached the Western Sea.

Now I shall sail across it to Cathay and when my ship returns to England laden with the riches of the East I shall receive a welcome like that of Drake when he came back from his great voyage around the world." Buoyed up by this triumphant hope, Hudson paced the deck, proud and erect, and eagerly scanned the great unknown water that was opening up before him.

But as day after day they pressed onward to the south, misgivings, which the great heart of Hudson would not heed, began to possess the minds of his less heroic crew. The ship was provisioned for only a year. It was now September, and six months had passed. Hudson Strait would soon freeze up behind them. It would not be open again before June of the next year. If this should not prove to be the Western Sea, then they would be winter-bound in an unknown land. Twin horrors, starvation and the rigors of an Arctic winter, loomed up before them, and the dread fires of mutiny started to smolder among the crew.

For a time, Hudson checked this danger by deposing the mate, Robert Juet, an old seaman who from the very beginning of the voyage had been a grumbler and a mischief-maker and appointing Robert Billet in his place. But when at last they reached James Bay and all further progress south and west was barred by land, the full danger of their situation dawned upon them. From that moment Hudson went in ever-growing peril from his crew.

Until the first of November they sailed hither and thither, seeking a way out of James Bay, that "labyrinth

without end, as they called it. Then they hauled their ship aground, probably in what is now Rupert Bay, and prepared for the winter. By November 10th the new-forming ice had gripped the ship fast, and the hardships of winter had begun.

The cold was intense, and the decks and port windows were soon coated with frost. But fortunately there was plenty of firewood ashore for the cutting. Stone fireplaces were built aboard, and pans of shot, heated red hot, were taken to warm the berths at night. The ship's surgeon, a Dutchman, made medicine from the leaves of some strange evergreen shrubs which proved an excellent remedy for the scurvy and other ills which assailed the crew. Luckily, too, the woods were alive with game, especially partridge and white ptarmigan, and so Hudson was able to put his men on short allowance of ship's provisions, thus saving more of their stores for the spring.

But all the time trouble was brewing. Juet, the deposed mate, was cunningly plotting to get his revenge. The men began even openly to oppose the Captain, and Henry King, the carpenter, when commanded to build a house on shore, bluntly refused. Worst of all the mutineers was a young man, Henry Greene. He was a worthless fellow whom Hudson in bigness of heart had picked from the London streets. Treating him like a son, the Captain had taken him into his own home. Now, when Hudson gave to another the coat of a dead sailor, Greene, to whom it had been promised, turned against his master and foully plotted his overthrow.

With the early spring there came to the ship the first Indian whom they had seen. Hudson treated him in a friendly fashion, presenting him, to his great delight, with a knife, a looking glass, and some buttons. The next day the Indian returned, dragging after him a toboggan on which were two deer and two beaver skins. "He had a scrip under his arm," says Prickett, "out of which he drew those things which the master had given him. He took the knife and laid it upon one of the beaver skins, and his glass and buttons upon the other, and so gave them to the master who received them. And the savage took those things which the master had given him and put them up into his scrip again. Then the master showed him an hatchet for which he would have given the master one of his deer skins, but our master would have them both. And so he had, although not willingly. After many signs of people to the north and south, and that after so many sleeps he would come again, he went away but never came more." Thus, in the bargaining of Henry Hudson with this lone Indian, began the long history of the fur trade on Hudson Bay.

And now in May, when the ice was breaking up, it was time to prepare for the return voyage. Hudson commanded that birds and fish be taken and cured to refill the depleted stores. Unfortunately, there were some of the crew who neglected to do their share in this work, and these were the very ones who were the first to cause trouble when later the stock of provisions ran low.

Early in June they were ready to set sail. But first

Hudson, calling the men on deck, made an equal division of food among them. For each man there was just one pound of bread. "He wept," we are told, "as he gave it to them." There were also some fish and nine cheeses to be divided among them. This must last till they reached Digges Island, at the mouth of the Strait, where they had found such an abundance of wild fowl and the well-filled Eskimo caches.

As they sailed slowly north, always impeded by the floating ice, their situation steadily grew worse. Greene and some of the others devoured all their food in a few hours and soon became hungry and desperate. The Captain had once threatened to leave behind on the Bay any one found guilty of plotting against him. Now this turned into an evil thought in the mind of the traitor Greene. With Juet and Billet, whose place as mate had been given to King, he went cunningly around to those of the crew who they thought could be won over to mutiny.

"It is better," Greene said, "to run the risk of hanging at home than to starve slowly to death here in the ice. Let us put the nine sick men, the Captain, and all those who stand by him in the boat and set them adrift to shift for themselves. Then there will be food enough for us who are left and we shall get safely home."

Thus spake the base traitor, and, in the ears of the starving crew, his counsel found favor. So all through the short midsummer night of June 21st, 1611, the mutineers kept stealthy watch lest some one should warn the

Captain of his peril. Then with the dawn, when the faithful mate King, who had slept on deck, went below, the hatch was closed quickly upon him, and three others, Thomas, Bennett, and Wilson, took station by the door of the Captain's cabin to await his coming on deck.

Soon the door opened, and Hudson, all unsuspecting, stepped forth. As Thomas and Bennett advanced towards him with insolent boldness, Wilson crept up behind and suddenly seized his arms.

"What does this mean?" cried Hudson, as he struggled to shake off his assailants.

"You will know fast enough when you are in the shallop," was the threatening answer.

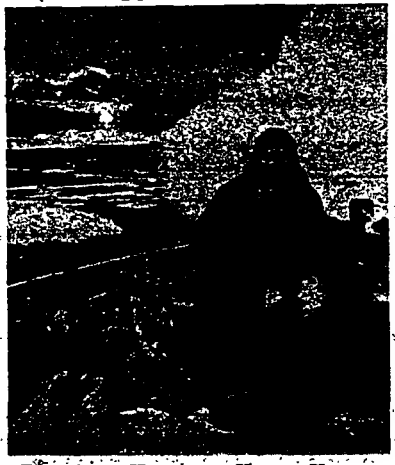
Quickly the Captain was bound and stood helpless before them. Then King, the mate, who had secured a sword in the hold and was bravely defending himself against the attacks of Juet, was saved from immediate death by some of the mutineers, who were not willing to do open murder, and was allowed to join his Captain. Under the direction of the treacherous Greene, who now took command, the sick and those lamed by frost bite during the winter, were cruelly ordered on deck, and with Hudson, his son, and the mate, were tumbled into the ship's boat.

Then arose oaths and a scuffle, and there burst forth from among the mutineers a sailor named Philip Staffe.

"Ye villains!" he cried, "you will all hang for this when you get back to England. Unless you force me, I will not stay on the ship. Give me my chest of tools and I will go in the boat with the Master."

So they let him go, a true-hearted Englishman, resolved to follow his duty even to death. Into the boat, along with the carpenter's box, was thrown a gun, some powder and shot, an iron pot, and a little meal.

Throughout this shameful scene Hudson had borne himself with courage and dignity. Seeing that the crew had the upper hand and were resolved on their murderous course, he uttered neither angry protest nor weak plea for his life. His arms being unbound by those in the boat, he now took his place at the tiller, calmly facing his fate and upborne by the duty of caring for the helpless men whose sole hope lay in him.



THE LAST HOURS OF HENRY HUDSON
(From the Painting by Collier.)

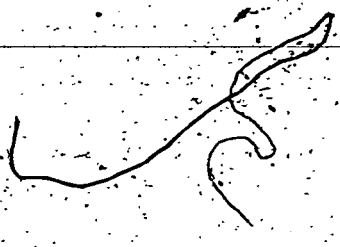
Then, when they had towed them free of the ice, the black and cowardly deed was finished by one of the mutineers cutting the rope and setting the little boat adrift. More quickly now the wind bore the ship onward until the lonely shallop was but a speck in the distance. But even long after it had been completely lost to view, the scowling, shamefaced mutineers gazed fearfully behind them, even their hardened consciences stricken with the guilt of the deed which they had done.

From such a foul crime good could not come. Quarreling continually among themselves and lacking the Master's navigating skill, the crew sailed blindly on as best they could. When they reached Digges Island, Greene and three others met the fate which they deserved at the hands of the Eskimos, who treacherously murdered them when they landed. Without having obtained the provisions which they sought, the rest battled their way slowly eastward through the Strait and out into the Atlantic.

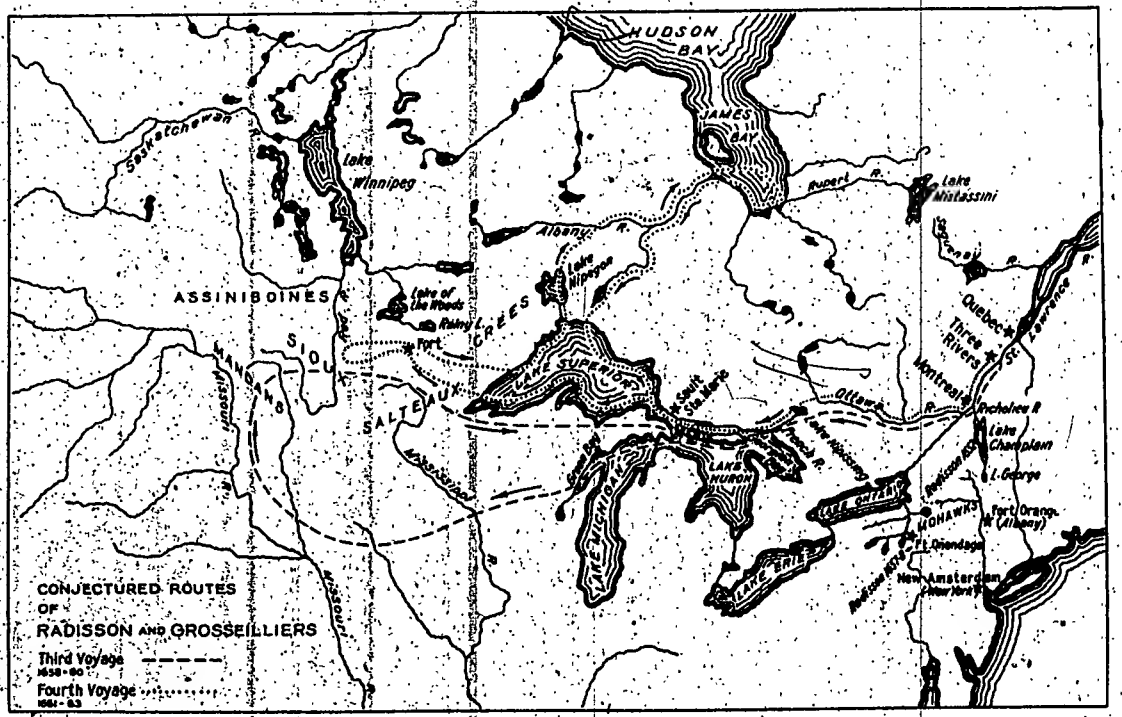
In the long voyage to Ireland they suffered untold agonies of hunger. The cook had to make meals from tallow candles, frying the bones of the wild fowl in them and seasoning the dish with vinegar. So weak did they become that they could no longer stand at the helm, but sat and steered the ship. As she tossed upon the waves, the sails flapped wildly loose with no man minding them. Juet, the guilty old mate, died of sheer starvation. The ship seemed doomed, pursued and haunted by the dreadful crime committed by the crew. But at last one day there came the glad cry of "Land! A sail!" They had reached Ireland. Thence they sailed to England, where they were placed on trial for their mutiny.

But what of Hudson and his castaways? All England was filled with sorrow at his sad fate. The very next year Captain Thomas Button, with two ships, the *Discovery* and the *Resolution*, was sent to search for the lost mariner, and if he still lived to rescue him. They spent the winter of 1612–13 on Hudson Bay, but of the great discoverer they found no trace.

Twenty years after Captain James found on Danby Island a number of stakes, hewn with a steel hatchet, and driven into the ground. Fifty years later Radisson discovered an "old house all marked and battered with bullets" as though it had been attacked by Indians, armed perhaps with firelocks supplied by French traders at Quebec. Were these the relics of a brave struggle of Hudson and his men against death at the hands of hostile natives? Or did they die of starvation in their little open boat, which then drifted aimless on until it stranded and rotted on the shore? Or did some great storm suddenly engulf them and thus mercifully end their sufferings? No man knows. But we do know, whatever his end, Henry Hudson would meet it with the same high courage with which he had sailed through perilous, unknown seas and faced a mutinous crew. We know that, if need arose, he would confront death bravely, trying to save the sick men committed to his keeping. But as to the actual way in which he perished — that is a secret which lies tight locked forever in the bosom of the broad bay that bears his name.



RADISSON AND GROSSEILLIERS


HUDSON BAY
JAMES BAY
Saskatchewan
Lake Winnipeg
Albany R.
Lake Mistassini
Quebec
St. Lawrence
Three Rivers
Montreal
ASSINIBOINES
Lake of the Woods
Rainy
Fort
CREES
Lake Nipigon
LAKE SUPERIOR
Sault Ste Marie
Ottawa R.
Richelieu R.
Lake Champlain
L. George
SIOUX
SALTEAUX
Lake Nipissing
French R.
LAKE MICHIGAN
LAKE HURON
LAKE ONTARIO
MOHAWKS
Fort Orange (Albany)
Ft Oneidas
LAKE ERIE
New Amsterdam
New York
Missouri
CONJECTURED ROUTES OF RADISSON AND GROSSEILLIERS
Third Voyage 1658-60
Fourth Voyage 1661-63

CHAPTER II

RADISSON AND GROSSEILLIERS

I. *Radisson among the Mohawks*

It is a far call from the bleak shores of Hudson Bay to the fertile, sunny valley of the St. Lawrence. Yet thither we must go if we are to follow the fortunes of that daring Frenchman who was to complete the work of Hudson by founding "The Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay."

Radisson — After an old print.

It was in the spring of 1652. The first golden rays of the rising sun were striking aslant the palisades and roof tops of the little fort of Three Rivers. Already from the chimneys the smoke of breakfast preparations rose up into the clear morning air, and life was beginning once more to bestir itself for the day's work. Suddenly with harsh creak and jar the great gate of the fort swung slowly back and three youths stepped forth. With a blithe "Good morning" and a gay wave of the

hand to the yawning sentry they shouldered their muskets and trudged off towards the woods.

It was clear that they were bound hunting, and their quarry was the wild fowl which found one of their favorite feeding-grounds in the reedy marshes of that expansion of the St. Lawrence called Lake St. Peter. As they went along, the placid river on their left shone between the tree trunks like a great sheet of burnished silver. The first spring flowers were beneath their feet. The robins chirped cheerfully as they hopped about the grass, and the squirrels scampered among the branches which already were beginning to bear a haze of tender green foliage.

So peaceful was the scene that it was difficult to realize that all its quiet beauty only masked a deadly peril. For the terrible Iroquois were on the warpath. Farmers on the outskirts of the settlement, beginning their spring work, had been found slain and scalped by this ruthless foe. And now the whole population of the district was huddled together in the fort for protection, and farmers could work only under military guard or in large parties with their rifles ever ready at hand.

About a mile from the fort the boys met a herdsman.

"Keep out from the foot of the hills," he said. "Things like a forest of heads were seen to rise up suddenly from the ground back there. Better return to the fort."

Two of the hunters, alarmed by this warning, soon decided to turn back, but the third, with a toss of his head and a scornful laugh, resolved to go on. And so Pierre Radisson, as yet but a youth of sixteen, fared forth alone

to the hunt regardless of danger. It was that dauntless courage of the youth that was to make of the man one of the world's greatest explorers and pioneers.

The boy's bravery had its reward in excellent luck. He wandered on about nine miles from the fort, shooting geese and ducks to his heart's content and hiding the game which he could not carry in hollow tree trunks. As the sun declined towards the west, he retraced his steps and already was within view of the fort, when suddenly a terrible sight rooted him to the ground. There, half concealed by the long grass, lay the bodies — naked and scalped — of his two companions of the morning.

Chilled with horror Radisson stood for a moment stock still. Then his keen mind began to work quickly. The Iroquois must be there, near at hand. His best chance lay in gaining the rush-lined river bank, where he might hide in the reeds till night arrived and then make a safe return to the fort.

Immediately stooping low, he began to run towards the river, but, as he did so, a hundred plumed heads craned up from grass and reeds and underbrush to see which way he went. From all sides muskets began to crash out. As he ran, the fearless Radisson without hesitation fired back at his numerous foes. But it was in vain. He was surrounded. A score of hands gripped him. His rifle was snatched away. His arms were securely bound. And then, flaunting the scalps of his companions before his sickened sight, they dragged him off through the woods to the spot on the shore where their canoes had been concealed.

It was only Radisson's bravery that had spared him the immediate fate of his comrades. The Iroquois had seen them turn back while he had gone on with a laugh into the mouth of danger. When attacked by overwhelming odds, he at once had fired back. Insensible to pity, the Indians, of all things, loved bravery, and their admiration for the fearless French youth led them to make him a prisoner.

They now dressed his hair like an Indian brave's and daubed his face with their war paint. That night he lay down between two warriors under a common blanket. "I slept a sound sleep," he says in his own story of his adventures, "for they wakened me upon the breaking of the day." Then, embarking in their canoes, the Iroquois fired their muskets and shouted their shrill war cries in defiance of the French at the fort.

They were Mohawk Indians, and their way home after their raids on the settlements lay up the Richelieu River to Lake Champlain and Lake George and thence west to the land of the Iroquois south of Lake Ontario. There in their villages they would be welcomed by the old men, the squaws, and the children, and their home coming would be celebrated by feasting and the torture of captives.

On the journey Radisson found ever greater favor with his captors. They taught him how to give the light, silent, skillful Indian stroke to the paddle, and how to hurl deftly the Indian spear. In the morning he was the first afoot to begin preparations for the day's journey and at night was the first to unsling his pack and cut firewood

for the encampment. When a young brave struck him, he thrashed him soundly with his fists. When an old man staggered beneath his burden, Pierre took it upon his own shoulders. And so the Mohawks, thinking that he had become one of themselves, gave him a hunting knife and shaved his head in front, leaving on top the warlock of the Indian brave. "I, viewing myself all in a pickle," says Radisson, to whom they brought a little mirror, "smeared with red and black, covered with such a top, could not but fall in love with myself, if I had not had better instruction to shun the sin of pride."

As they approached the Mohawk village a host of men, women, and children swarmed forth with shouts of joy at the return of the warriors and cries of exultation over the poor captives. In their hands they brandished clubs and whips, and they quickly formed themselves into two long lines between which the prisoners were compelled to run the gantlet of their blows. The rule was for the victim to be led slowly, with arms bound, down the lane of tormentors, but when it came Radisson's turn he was left free and told by his friends to run. Bounding quickly forward, the nimble lad ran so swiftly along the lines that the blows aimed at him as he passed fell on the empty air, and amid shouts and laughter he reached the other end unhurt.

There he was caught in the arms of a captive Huron woman, who was the wife of a great Iroquois chief. They had lost their son, and her heart had gone out to the handsome French boy. They now asked the Council of Chiefs

that Radisson might be adopted into the tribe as their son. So he was led into the Council Lodge and placed by the fire around which the chiefs solemnly sat smoking the great Council pipe and listening gravely to the passionate plea of the Indian woman for his life. At last with many deep "Ho Ho's," which meant "Yes, we are pleased," they gave their consent.

AN IROQUOIS CHIEF.

Radisson's Indian father and mother were very kind to him. Their dead son's name was Orimha, meaning "a stone," and when they learned that "Pierre" meant the same thing in French, they became still more fond of him. His father gave a great banquet in his honor to three hundred of the young braves of the Mohawks. To it, decked out in more finery of feathers, colored blankets, and wampum belts than all the rest, Radisson was led, and as they partook of such forest dainties as moose nose, beavers' tails, and bears' paws, the air resounded with shouts of "Chagon Orimha!" — "Be merry, Pierre!"

Pierre was now a Mohawk of the Mohawks. He quickly picked up the Indian language. He soon learned the lore of the woods from his companions and became skillful as the Indians themselves in setting traps, tracking wild animals, shaping the bark of the birch into graceful canoes,

and finding his way through the pathless forests. But though the life was wild and free and the Indians were kind, yet in his heart Pierre longed to return to his home at Three Rivers where his father and mother were mourning for him as dead. And so in the autumn he planned to escape with a friendly Algonquin captive.

They were out on a hunting expedition, and in the night Pierre and the Algonquin killed their three Iroquois companions. Concealing the bodies, they fled by stealthy flight journeys along the streams and through the forests till they were within a day's journey of Three Rivers. But just as they thought they were safe and were paddling boldly out across Lake St. Peter, they were spied by an Iroquois band on their way back from raids on the settlements. Raising their terrible war cry, the Indians gave chase, while Radisson and the Algonquin raced back again for the shore. But the Iroquois with their many paddles quickly overhauled them and fired a crashing volley, which killed the Algonquin and sank the canoe. Pierre himself was dragged dripping but unharmed from the water by the mocking Indians, to be reserved for a punishment of torture that was like to be far worse than death itself.

Then followed once again the long journey back to the Mohawk villages. As they approached them, two long, slender saplings were felled and stripped of their branches and made into a yoke which, fastened to the necks of the prisoners, held them helpless in a long single file. As they thus advanced, the men, women, and children rushed to belabor them with staves and leather bags filled with stones.

From this plight Pierre was rescued for a while by his Indian mother who, rushing through the crowd of torturers with the anguished cry of "Orimha! Orimha!" cut him free from the yoke and took him to her lodge. But soon there came a great angry throng which, with hideous cries and cruel mockery, dragged him forth again to the torture.

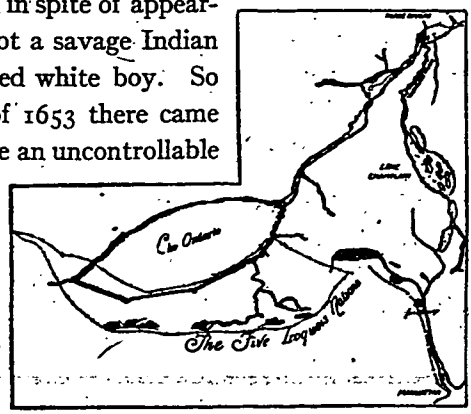
The prisoners were placed on scaffoldings, and for three days the devilish work of torture was carried on. Had it not been for the protection of the friendly family Radisson undoubtedly would have perished. As it was his fingers were cut and gnawed, the soles of his feet were burned in the fire embers, and his thumb was thrust into a great pipe filled with live coals.

On the third day, more dead than alive, he was led before the Great Council of Sachems to hear his fate. As before, his Indian father appeared in all his regalia as a great war chief and pled with passionate eloquence for Pierre's life, while his mother danced and sang of old time deeds of Indian valor. Costly gifts were offered as compensation to the relatives of the three murdered Mohawks. Then they withdrew. Long and solemn was the deliberation, and at last Pierre's father entered again to speak and sing. As he finished, he cut the captive's bonds, amid thunderous "Ho Ho's" that marked the approval of the deed.

Pierre was now once again free. For more than a month he could not use his burned feet. But he was looked after very tenderly by his Indian mother, and gradually

his strength returned. All winter he lived in the Mohawk lodges, and in the spring of 1653 he went on the warpath with the younger braves against the Eries, who lived to the west around Niagara. Radisson gained great praise for his skill in the chase and his bravery in battle.

But though the white man may easily don the red man's paint and feathers he cannot so easily assume the Indian nature, and, in spite of appearances, Pierre was not a savage Indian brave but a civilized white boy. So with the autumn of 1653 there came upon him once more an uncontrollable longing to be with his own folk again.

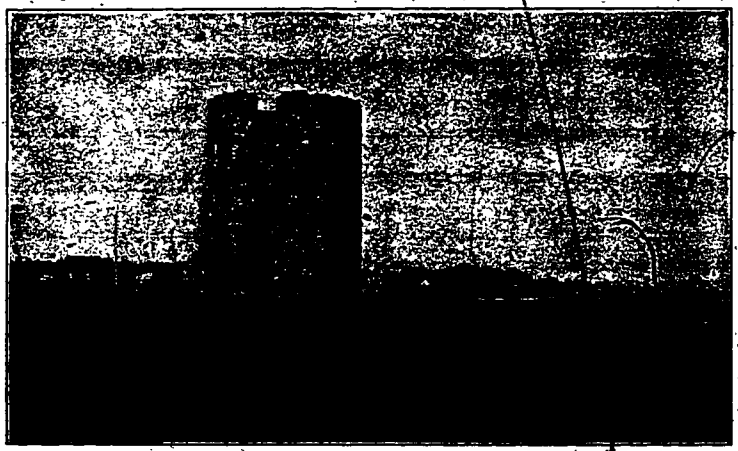


IROQUOIS COUNTRY IN THE DAYS OF RADISSON.—From the *Jesuit Relations*, the dotted lines indicating Radisson's travels while he was with the Mohawks.

This time he planned more carefully. Taking only a hatchet, one morning when the tingle of fall frost was in the air, he sallied forth as though to spend a day in cutting firewood. But no sooner was he out of sight of the village than he broke into a steady loping run such as he could maintain for hours. All day through the tangled forest he kept resolutely on, following with keen eyes the faint trail which he knew led to the Dutch settlement of Fort Orange, now Albany on the Hudson. Nor did he pause when the night shadows fell upon the forest. Dawn

found him haggard and faint but still reeling on with dogged steps, and by nightfall he was safe in Fort Orange with the Dutch.

But he had barely escaped capture. The Mohawks were hard on his heels. For three days he had to lie in concealment while his Indian friends roamed through the fort calling out to their "Orimha" to come back with



MARTELLO TOWER OF REFUGE IN TIME OF INDIAN WARS — THREE RIVERS.

them to the forest. But at last they gave up in despair and returned to their villages.

Washing the war paint from his face and the grease from his hair, Radisson now assumed once again the dress and manners of the white man. A kind Jesuit priest, Father Poncet, supplied him with money. Descending the Hudson to New Amsterdam, now New York, Pierre took ship for Amsterdam in Holland, where he arrived in

January, 1654. Thence he went to La Rochelle in France, where in the spring he embarked in a fishing vessel bound for the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. At Isle Percée at the mouth of the St. Lawrence he met some Algonquins on their way up the river to wage war on the Iroquois. He joined them, and in May, 1654, after an absence of two years, he reached his home at Three Rivers. There he was welcomed by father and mother as though he returned from the dead, while his friends listened in amazement to the thrilling story of his two years of adventures among the savage Iroquois.

II. *Radisson at Fort Onondaga*

But Radisson was one of those stirring spirits who could not long rust in idleness, and in the Canada of those days there were always perilous enterprises ready to hand for those brave enough to undertake them. A new situation had arisen with the Iroquois. These savages had embarked on a war with the Eries, and, in order to be free to wage it and to secure greater supplies of powder and muskets, they had sought a peace with the French. So a truce was arranged. But the cunning Onondagas went further. They professed a great love for the French and asked to have a settlement made in their country. Their real object was that the settlers and priests might be hostages in their hands. Then they could prevent the Governor of New France from taking measures to punish them for their outrages by threatening to murder the French who had settled among them.

The Governor fell into the trap. In the very year that Pierre had escaped from the Iroquois, missionaries had gone among them. In 1656, Major Dupuis and sixty Frenchmen had founded a colony called Onondaga, and in the following year a party of two Jesuits, twenty young Frenchmen, and one hundred Christian Hurons prepared to set out from Montreal to reënforce the little settlement. They had eighty Iroquois as an escort. But the expedition was incomplete without an interpreter who could speak the Iroquois language fluently. Here was the chance for Pierre. The venture gave every promise of all the excitement which he loved. He volunteered for the post.

After long preparations, on July 26th, 1657, the party set out. Early in the journey it became clear that beneath the friendly behavior of the Iroquois lurked a savage treachery. The Huron warriors were suddenly set upon and murdered, and their women and children, in spite of the efforts of the Jesuits, were later put to the torture. But the Frenchmen were not molested, probably because they thought it would be safer to attack them later. Radisson, whom they soon recognized as the "Onimha" of the Mohawks, was treated kindly, and he on his part sent gifts to his Indian father and mother.

After a series of stiff portages past the rapids above Montreal, their way lay along the most beautiful part of the St. Lawrence. Great forests on either hand swept majestically down to the shores of the noble river, while its clear, sparkling waters were dotted with the fairyland of the Thousand Isles. Few white men had yet gazed

upon this lovely scene, and the eyes of the Frenchmen shone with pride in this glorious heritage of New France. When they emerged on the blue expanse of Lake Ontario, they turned south and followed the shore to the mouth of the Oswego River. Ascending this stream, they finally reached Lake Onondaga, where they were warmly welcomed by the garrison of the fort which they had come to aid.

Fort Onondaga was in a small clearing on the crest of a low hill overlooking the lake. In the centre was a substantial house with two high towers loopholed for musketry. For further protection a stout palisade and a deep ditch ran round about it, inclosing a space large enough to enable the French to keep their cattle within it.

It was not long before alarming signs of the dangerous position of the little French force began to appear. The attitude of the Indians became menacing. They no longer pretended a desire to become Christians, but, ceasing to listen to the Jesuits' Bible stories, Senecas, Cayugas, and Onondagas strutted about in their war paint, while from the neighboring forest came the sounds of feasting and the singing of wild war songs. Four hundred Mohawks soon came to join the swarm of foes, and these impudently built their wigwams for the winter before the very gates of the fort itself.

So vastly outnumbered were the French that they wondered greatly why the redskins delayed their attack. Then one day, through a Huron slave, came the news that the Governor had seized twelve of the Iroquois and was holding them at Quebec as hostages for the safety of

Fort Onondaga. Taking fresh heart at this news, the Frenchmen settled down for the long siege that they now knew awaited them.

Winter set in. The snow fell like a deep soft blanket over the earth, and the song of the streams was hushed by the thickening ice crust. It was an anxious and dreary Christmas the Frenchmen spent that year, far from their friends and in the midst of treacherous foes. Their sentries were attacked at night, and by day they could venture abroad only at the risk of their lives. Fortunately they had plenty of food, and the Indians, confident that there could be no escape before spring, bided their time.

But in February a terrible plot was revealed. A dying Mohawk confessed to one of the priests that the Indians were bent on massacring half of the French and holding the rest till the Iroquois hostages were freed from Quebec. Radisson, who alone of the company could move as with a charmed life among the Mohawks, learned from his father that this news was only too true. "What could we do?" he writes. "We were in their hands. It was as hard for us to get away from them as for a ship in full sea without a pilot."

Though they knew not how they could escape, yet the French began to make preparations for a flight should a chance present itself. Their frail birch canoes could not possibly live in the ice-jammed rivers of early spring, and so they secretly built two large flat-bottomed boats. When these by mischance were seen by a Huron slave a great danger threatened. He had heard the Jesuits

tell the story of Noah's ark and now he spread abroad a wonderful rumor of how the white men were building great arks of refuge against a coming flood that would overwhelm the land. The suspicious Iroquois sent spies to investigate, but before they arrived the French had built a false floor over their boats and on it they piled high their canoes. Thus the Iroquois were tricked and went away thinking that the Huron had lied.

And now the spring had arrived. The ice was breaking and the heavy boats could force a way through. But how to escape from the fort, and launch them, and get safely away — that was the question. To this it was the resourceful Radisson who gave answer. He had not lived among the Mohawks for nothing. He knew that the Indians were both superstitious and gluttonous. So he persuaded a young man in the fort to feign illness and invited the Indians to help in his cure by taking part in one of the feasts which they loved, "where everything must be eaten." The banquet would be spread generously by the French.

Far and wide through the forest spread the news of the great feast of the white men, and the Indians flocked to the gates of the fort to partake of it. But for two days Radisson kept them waiting outside, smelling the savory odors of preparation and entertained by the soldiers with music and songs and dancing. Then on the evening of the second day, with a great blare of bugles, the gates were swung back and out stepped the Frenchmen bearing the feast. Round the great circle of squatting Indians

they went with huge iron pots filled with vension, bear steaks, fowl, fish, and corn. The French had even slaughtered their hogs — all save one — for the banquet. As soon as an Indian dish became empty it was heaped up again from the pots, and when these began to run low they were replenished from the abundance within the fort. Never had the Iroquois faced such a feast before, but whenever an Indian flagged or drew back, the pretended sick man cried out with a doleful voice, "Would you have me die?" and then the Indians would return to the attack. Some of the French who had fiddles played away with might and main to keep up the excitement, while everywhere went Radisson urging the Indians on. At last, one by one, overcome by their gluttony, they fell into a sodden sleep.

Now the moment was come for escape. Others of the garrison had been busy making preparations for flight. The two flat-bottomed boats and some stout dugout skiffs were quickly run down to the Lake shore. The baggage was hurried aboard, and they were ready to start.

But first Radisson completed his plot. Some old uniforms had been stuffed with straw, and these effigies, with hats and boots all complete, were stood up like sentries at different points in the fort. The poultry also was left behind, and the one lone pig. Through a loophole beside the gate ran a rope attached to a bell which the Indians pulled when they wished to summon the guard. To this rope the ingenious Radisson now tied the pig, so that when the Indians pulled they would hear a move-

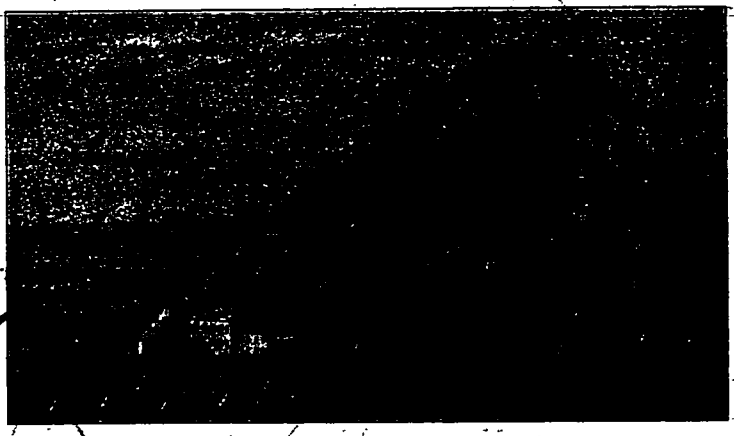
ment within as though people were moving about in the fort. Then, locking and barring the gate, Radisson and his men climbed cautiously over the palisade and made for the boats. Silently, at the word of command, they pushed from the shore and melted into the blackness of the night.

The Indians lay long in their gluttonous stupor, and when they awoke their wits were benumbed. A storm of sleet in the night had washed away the traces of the French departure. When the Indians pulled the rope, the bell did not ring, but movements were heard within, and when no one came to the gates, they concluded that the "black robes," as they called the priests, were praying. They heard the fowls clucking and crowing, and, when they peered through the palisade, they saw sentries on duty. When at last, grown suspicious, they broke in and saw they were tricked, their amazement and rage knew no bounds.

But pursuit was in vain. The French by now were on Lake Ontario, battling their way through the ice jam at the foot of the lake. Sometimes they could get through the ice only by chopping a passage with their hatchets, but slowly they forged ahead and at last got into the river. There the swollen current carried them quickly along and floated them safely over the rocks of the rapids, except for the loss of one boat.

It was March 20th when they had stolen away from Fort Onondaga. On April 3rd they reached Montreal, and on April 23rd the little flotilla came safely to anchor beneath the frowning heights of Quebec. Onondaga was

saved. Its settlers had escaped, as one of the Jesuits said, "like the children of Israel by night from the land of Egypt." And the chief credit of the exploit belonged to



QUEBEC. — From one of the oldest prints in existence.

Pierre Radisson. He had won his spurs as a knight of the wilderness. He had become one of the heroes of New France.

III. *Radisson and Grosseilliers Discover the Great North-West*

And now Radisson was to step from the rôle of a doughty Indian fighter to the still greater part of a far ranging explorer. He had been home hardly a month before new plans of adventure began to possess him. Each summer there came from the distant, mysterious West and North rich cargoes of beaver pelts. The Indians who brought them down the Ottawa in their canoes told tales of vast

regions that dwarfed New France to littleness, of mighty rivers which rivalled the St. Lawrence, and of distant, unknown seas. Frenchmen had gone as far as Sault Ste. Marie and Green Bay on Lake Michigan, but beyond that all was unexplored.

To Radisson this region was like the enchanted castle to the prince in the fairy tale. He must be the first to break the spell and tread the soil of that new land, for just as at the prince's kiss the beautiful sleeping princess would wake to life, so would the coming of the first white man rouse the West from its sleep of centuries and give it to the world.

In his projects of exploration Radisson found a kindred spirit in his brother-in-law, Medard Chouart des Groseilliers. Indeed, it is quite probable that it was Groseilliers who first fired the imagination of the younger Radisson to penetrate into the Great West, for he was a veteran fur trader who had been as far afield as Lake Nipissing and Green Bay, and he was full of the Indian stories about the country that lay beyond.

So, silently, one night in June, 1658, having fully resolved on the great adventure, Radisson and Groseilliers launched their canoe at Three Rivers. Travelling only by darkness to avoid the prowling Iroquois, they reached Montreal in three days. There they joined a party of one hundred and fifty Algonquins who were about to start back for their homes on the Upper Lakes.

Their way up the Ottawa was beset by Iroquois war parties, and had it not been for the cool leadership of the

two Frenchmen, it would have fared badly with the Algonquins. As it was, they managed to beat off their assailants, and then, reaching Georgian Bay by way of Lake Nipissing and the French River, they crossed the upper stretches of Lakes Huron and Michigan and arrived at Green Bay.

But even there the terror of the Iroquois pursued them. Scouts reported that a band of Mohawks were on their trail, and panic seized the Algonquins. Radisson, however, headed a party of the more courageous, and, tracking the intruders down with a cunning greater than their own, he pounced suddenly upon them and killed them to a man. Great was the gratitude of the Algonquins for this aid, and in their friendly wigwams the Frenchmen passed most of the winter at Green Bay.

"But our mind was not to stay here," Radisson tells us, "but to know the remotest peoples; and because we had been willing to die in their defence these Indians consented to conduct us." So in the spring of 1659, they pushed onward to the west till they stood on the banks of "a mighty river, great, rushing, profound, and comparable to the St. Lawrence." This could be only the Mississippi. Thus, ten years before Marquette and Joliet, and twenty years before La Salle, Radisson and Grosseilliers watched the turbid spring flood of "the father of Waters" sweeping southward towards the Gulf of Mexico. As they raised their eyes from the swirling current to the distant shore, they were the first of all white men to gaze upon the broad and bountiful land of the Great North-West.

All summer they ranged through this fairyland of nature. We cannot be sure just where they went, but apparently they first travelled south-west, for Radisson says: "We desired not to go to the North until we had made a discovery in the South. The Indians," he continues, "were all amazed to see us and very civil. The further we sojourned the delightfuller the land became. I can say that in all my life time I have never seen a finer country. The people have long hair. They reap twice a year. They war against the Sioux and the Crees. They told us of men that built great cabins and have beards and knives like the French." These must have been the Spaniards far to the south in Mexico. Pumpkins and corn, according to Radisson, grew luxuriantly in the Indian gardens. "Their arrows," he tells us, "were not of stone but of fish bones. Their dishes were made of wood. They had great calumets of red and green stone and great store of tobacco. They had also a kind of drink that made them mad for a whole day." These Indians must have been the Mandans of the Missouri, which Radisson calls the Forked River. They were, perhaps, the very tribes which La Vérendrye was to visit nearly a century later.

Turning north from this pleasant land, the two explorers visited among the Sioux, and then, veering to the east, in the fall they reached the Jesuit Mission at Sault Ste. Marie, having passed through the territories of the Crees and the Sautaux, whom they found at bitter war. Radisson's own story speaks of mountains lying far inland to the west, while the Jesuits tell of the travellers

having been among Indians who used coal. Judging from these things, Radisson and Grosseilliers were not only the discoverers of the West, but they must also have explored far into the very heart of it — perhaps as far as the edge of the Bad Lands of Montana.

Had the two Frenchmen any idea of that great movement to the West of which they were the first forerunners? It would seem that Radisson had some vision of what the future held in store. "The country," he says, "was so pleasant, so beautiful, and so fruitful, that it grieved me to see that the world could not discover such enticing countries to live in. What a conquest would this be at little or no cost! What pleasure should people have instead of misery and poverty! Why should not men reap of the love of God here?" Great, free, open, sunny spaces, fresh from the hand of God, where millions could make new homes and live in peace — this was the treasure house that Radisson and Grosseilliers in the summer of 1659 unlocked and opened wide for all the world.

The following winter was one of the coldest ever known in Canada. But the colder the weather the thicker the coat of the beaver, and so, in the spring of 1660, the adventurers were able to set out on the long journey to Montreal with a rich cargo of furs. They were attended by an escort of five hundred Algonquin, Huron, and Sioux warriors.

It was reported that a thousand Iroquois were on the warpath against New France, so the utmost precautions were taken. All went well until they reached the head

of the Long Sault, the most perilous part of the Ottawa. Here they sighted sixteen Iroquois canoes whose occupants fled before them. Radisson at once guessed that they had a stronghold at the foot of the rapids. Taking half of his men, he advanced quickly across the portage, only to find the Iroquois intrenched in a rough barricade near the river. But very unwisely the Indians had left their canoes at the water's edge. The quick-witted Radisson at once directed some of his men to creep forward towards these, sheltering themselves behind great bundles of beaver pelts which they pushed before them along the ground. The Iroquois, seeing that they must either abandon the fort or be trapped in it by losing their boats, with a wild yell rushed to the bank and made their escape down the river amid a pursuing spatter of bullets. The portage had been won.

But within the fort and the glade which surrounded it a gruesome sight awaited them. The palisade pock-marked with bullets and breached in many places, the oozing, muddy water of the well scraped in the clay soil within, the scalps left dangling from the picket tops, and the charred remains scattered around the place of torture on the river bank — all spoke of a terrible tragedy but recently enacted there.

"The worst of it was," says Radisson, "the French had no water, as we plainly saw, for they had made a hole in the ground out of which they could get but little because the fort was on a hill. It was pitiable. There was not a tree but what was shot with bullets. The Iroquois

had rushed to make a breach — the French set fire to a barrel of powder to drive the Iroquois back — but it fell inside the fort. Upon this the Iroquois entered, so that not one of the French escaped. It was terrible for we came there eight days after the defeat."

It was not until Radisson reached Montreal that he learned the full story of the famous stand of Daulac and his sixteen comrades at the foot of the Long Sault. Had Radisson arrived but a few days earlier on the scene, the heroes who had saved New France might have been saved themselves.

At Three Rivers the two explorers were greeted by their friends and relatives for whom their two years' absence had been a long and anxious time. At Quebec, the capital, they were received like generals returning from a victory. Flags fluttered up to mastheads in salute, church bells pealed out, and cannon thundered forth a welcome. The Governor gave them gifts and they were fêted everywhere.

IV. *Radisson and Grosseilliers in the North*

For the rest of the year Radisson lived quietly with his parents at Three Rivers. Most men would have been content with achievements such as his. He had done valorous deeds and had built up a lasting fame as an explorer. But Radisson was not yet twenty-six years of age. The hot blood of youth still ran in his veins. He thirsted for still more adventure. He was filled with the passion of penetrating yet further into the great unknown regions

of the continent. He had been to the west — he must now go to the north. And Grosseilliers was equally ready and eager for the quest.

From the Indians who came down the St. Maurice and the Saguenay year after year with their precious burden of furs for trade, the French heard continually of a certain "great Bay of the North." They guessed, of course, that this was no other than the bay discovered by Henry Hudson half a century before. But as yet the English had taken no advantage of their discovery. Clearly the region about this northern sea was rich beyond all dreams in furs. The Frenchman first to find the route overland to it would reap the reward of both fame and wealth.

Now from the Crees about the shores of Lake Superior Radisson and Grosseilliers had heard the same tale, and the Indians had claimed that every summer they went to hunt on this "Bay of the North." The two adventurers, therefore, determined to try to reach it overland by travelling with the Crees.

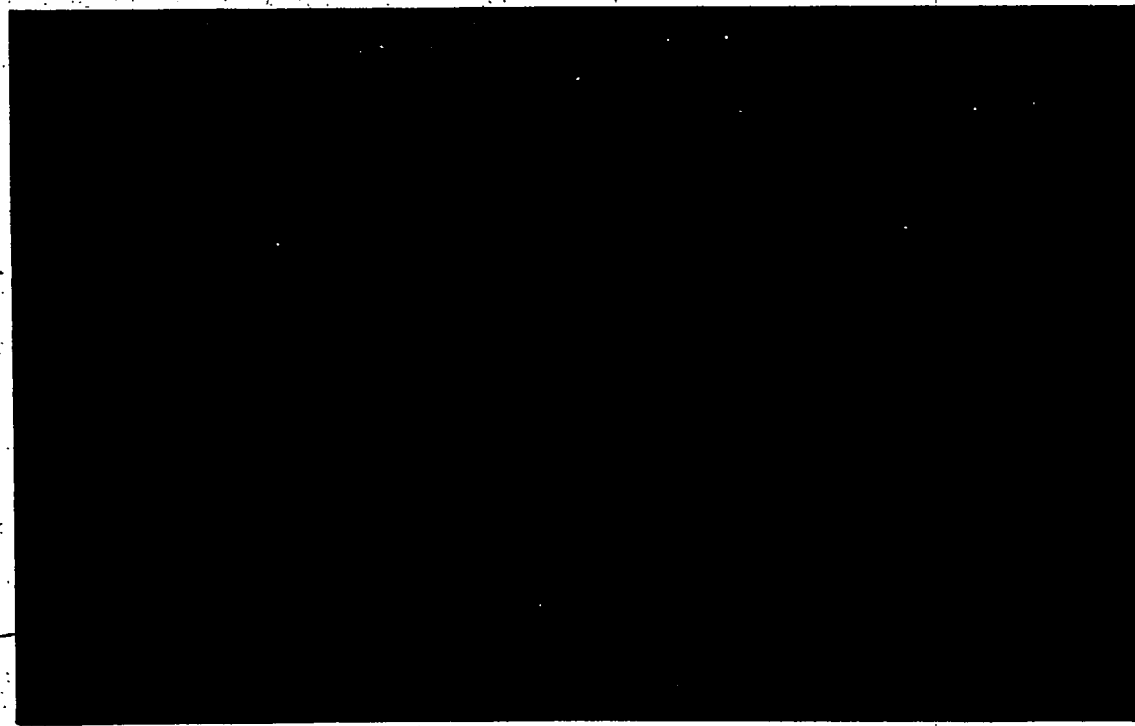
But when they asked the Governor, D'Avaugour, for permission to go on this voyage of discovery, they at once encountered difficulty. He would give the explorers a license to engage in the fur trade only on condition of their sharing half of their profits with him, and to trade without a license might mean fine, imprisonment, or even death. Radisson and Grosseilliers, however, were men who would not hesitate to take a risk. They were resolved neither to submit to be thus plundered by the selfish Governor nor to give up their expedition. So, late one night in August,

1661, they embarked in their canoes at Three Rivers and, in defiance of the Governor, set out again to try their fortunes in the wilderness.

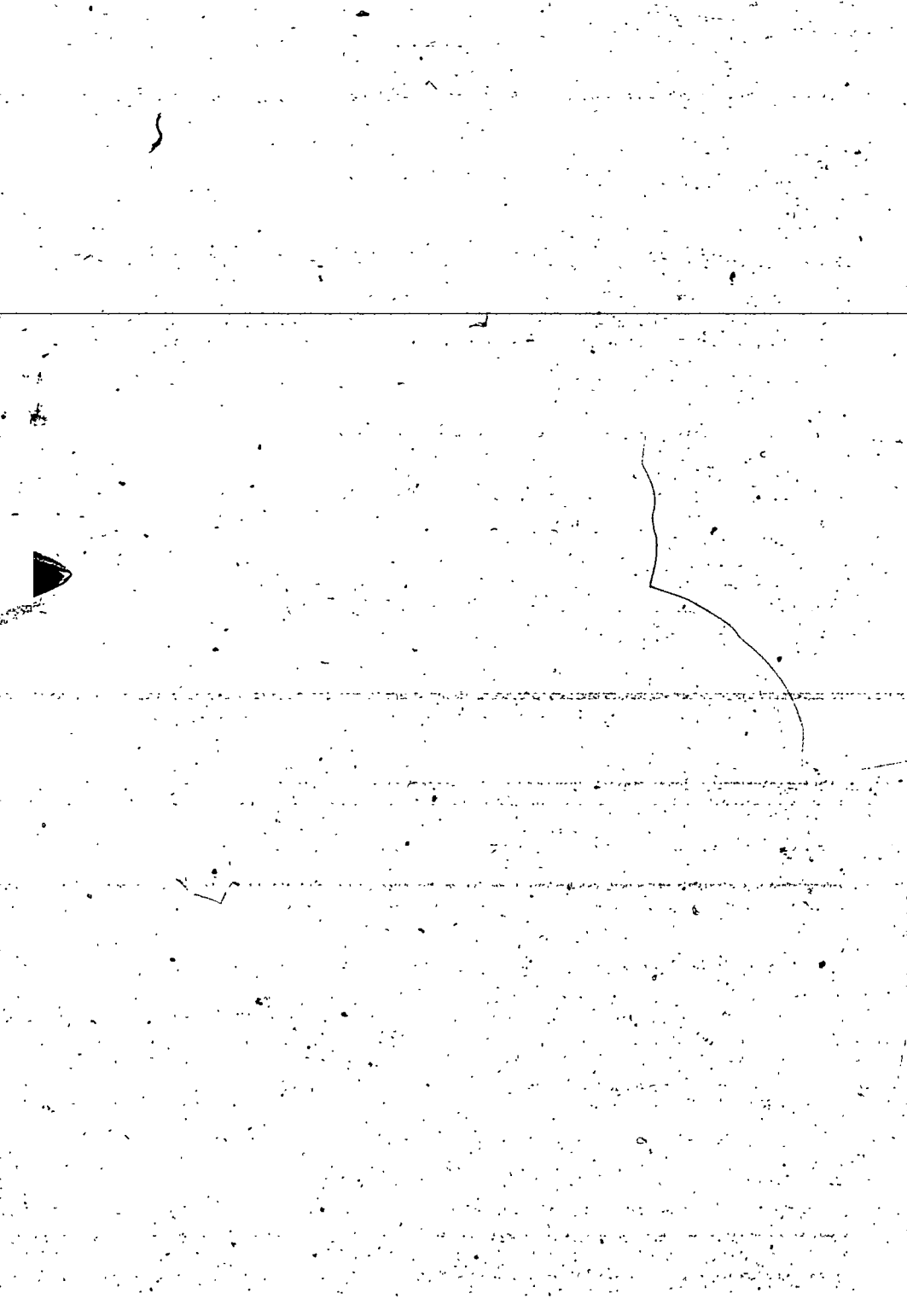
It was October before they reached Lake Superior and began coasting westward along the south shore. They were now in a region untraversed before by white men. Radisson heard from the Indians of the rich Superior copper mines and gazed upon the famous pictured rocks. Of the stone arch he says: "I gave it the name of St. Peter because that was my name and I was the first Christian to see it."

At the western extremity of the Lake they struck inland, and, somewhere near where the boundary between Minnesota and Ontario now lies, they constructed the first fort and trading post in all the West. It was a rather crude structure, hurriedly built in two days with logs hewn from the surrounding forest. It was triangular in shape with the base resting on the river, and it was roofed over with a thatch of interlaced branches.

The situation of the two traders thus isolated in the wilderness was not without its perils. They had stores of powder, shot, and goods for trade that might easily tempt the Indians to attack and murder them. To prevent a surprise, Radisson had recourse to that ingenuity which had so often saved him in difficult situations. He strung cunningly concealed cords through the grass and branches about the fort, so that neither man nor beast could approach without blundering into them. To the strings he then attached little bells which would ring out at the slightest disturbance. More than once in the long winter



LATE ONE NIGHT THEY EMBARKED IN THEIR CANOES.



nights that followed the little garrison stood to arms when the tinkling bells warned them of the presence of prowling wild beast or of marauding Indian.

As the news of the presence of the white men spread through the northern woods more and more Indians came to visit them. So Radisson thought it wise to take a further precaution. Constructing little tubes of dry birch bark he filled them with gunpowder and arranged them in a circle around the fort. Then one night, in the presence of the Indians, he suddenly seized a brand from the fire and applied it to the fuse. To the amazement and terror of the onlookers, the fire ran sputtering and leaping along the ground till the whole fort was inclosed with a protecting ring of flame. That was enough. The white men were the masters of magic arts. Thenceforth they and their goods were inviolate.

As the winter wore on, four hundred Crees arrived with an invitation to visit their encampment which lay still farther north-west towards the land of the Assiniboines, now Manitoba. The explorers accepted. "We went away," says Radisson, "free from any burden, while those poor miserables thought themselves happy to carry our equipage in the hope of getting a brass ring, an awl, or a needle. They made a great noise calling us gods and devils. We marched four days through the woods. The country was beautiful with clear parks." They were welcomed by the Crees with feasts and dancing, and they soon won their way to the hearts of their Indian hosts by generous gifts of trinkets.

And now one of the most trying ordeals of forest life descended on the travellers. Heavy rains were followed by an enduring frost that formed a hard ice crust over the snow. This confined and killed the rabbits, grouse, and other small animals on which the larger game fed. The Indians are always improvident, and they had laid up no reserve store of food. Game had been scarce before and

A Group of Cree Indians.

now it quite disappeared. Soon famine, the dread of winter in the North, began to stalk through the camp of the Crees and take its toll of life. The women and children suffered first, the selfish warriors snatching the food out of their hands to appease their own hunger. Then, as the scarcity increased, they had to dig down through the snow to get roots from the frozen ground. They boiled the bark of trees and the bones from the waste heap to get a sort of soup. At last the only food left was the

buckskin that had been tanned for clothing. "We ate it so eagerly," writes Radisson, "that our gums did bleed. We became the image of death. Good God, have mercy on these innocent people: have mercy on us who acknowledge Thee!" Five hundred Crees died of want in a few weeks, and it was not till early spring came that game reappeared, and the frail, emaciated survivors, who could scarcely drag themselves from their tepees, began to recover their strength.

For six weeks in the spring Grosseilliers and Radisson hunted buffalo and deer in the land of the Sioux. Then they returned to accompany the Crees in their journey to the "great Bay of the North." For many days they travelled on rivers flowing northward. "We were in danger a thousand times from the ice jam," Radisson records. "At last we came fullsail on a deep bay. We came to the seaside where we found an old house all demolished and battered with bullets. We went from isle to isle all that summer. We went further to see the place that the Indians were to pass the summer. The river came from the lake that empties itself in the Saguenay, a hundred leagues from the great river of Canada, to where we were in the Bay of the North. We passed the summer quietly coasting the seaside. The people here burn not their prisoners, but knock them on the head. We went up another river to the Upper Lake."

Such is Radisson's account of his summer's journeyings in 1662. It is vague, and, consequently, many quarrels have arisen as to where he actually went. Some claim

that he got only as far as Lake Winnipeg and that the Upper Lake to which he returned was the Lake of the Woods. Others contend that he actually reached Hudson Bay overland and that the Upper Lake was Lake Superior. But this we know, that in the spring of 1663 Radisson and Grosseilliers descended the Ottawa at the head of seven hundred warriors and with three hundred and sixty canoes loaded with one of the richest cargoes of furs ever brought to Quebec. We know, too, that the explorers were convinced that they had reached Hudson Bay, because it was their proclaimed design to return to this El Dorado of the fur trade, not overland this time, but by Hudson Strait in large sea-going ships with which it would be possible to carry on a much greater trade than could be done with mere flotillas of canoes.

But in this project they were destined to meet many checks. They had left the colony against the Governor's orders. They had traded without a license. Grosseilliers was thrown for a time into prison. They were fined $50,000, and $70,000 worth of their furs was seized as a government tax. Out of a cargo worth probably $300,000, the explorers were left for themselves only a paltry $20,000.

Grosseilliers at once sailed for France to secure justice, but the influence of the Governor with the court was too strong for him, and he failed. Then the two explorers secretly took passage to Anticosti and thence to Isle Percée in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where a French merchant had promised to send a vessel in which they could make the voyage to Hudson Bay. But the ship failed to appear.

Afraid to return to Canada lest they should be punished for their attempt to sail to the Bay without a license, they turned south to Acadia. There at Port Royal they met Zachariah Gillam, a New England sea captain from Boston, whom they persuaded to attempt the voyage to Hudson Bay. But the season was late, and off the coast of Labrador the captain turned back, despairing of being able to make the passage of the Strait.

In Boston, however, they were persuaded to try to induce the English king to sanction their project and English merchants to back it with their money. So on August 1st, 1665, Radisson and Grosseilliers sailed from Nantucket for London with Sir George Carterett, who had promised to befriend them with the king. Unfortunately, at that time England was at war with Holland, and the Dutch warship, *Caper*, after a desperate two hours' battle, captured the English vessel and her French passengers. The prisoners were landed in Spain, and it was not until early in 1666 that the two French adventurers set foot at last on English soil.

V. *The Founding of the Great Company*

It was the year of the Great Plague. Grass grew in the deserted streets of London. Where once the roar of traffic had resounded and traders hawked their wares, there was now heard only the dread rumbling of the death carts and the mournful, echoing cry, "Bring out your dead!" From the afflicted city the king and his court had fled for safety to Oxford, and thither the Frenchmen

followed them, where they were formally presented to His Majesty, King Charles II.

Great was the interest with which the king and his friends heard Radisson tell the story of his boyhood adventures among the Iroquois and of the wanderings of Grosseilliers and himself in the wonderland of the North-West. But when the explorers told of the immense cargo of furs which they had brought down to Quebec on their last voyage and unfolded their plan of an expedition by sea into Hudson Bay, the interest of their listeners grew even more intense. Here, if the adventurers' tale were true, was the very seat and centre of the fur trade. Here, lying unclaimed in the bleak, unpeopled North, was wealth that rivalled the gold and silver of Mexico and Peru.

PRINCE RUPERT, FIRST GOVERNOR OF THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY.

To the king and his friends the prospect of acquiring these fabulous riches was enchanting. Radisson and Grosseilliers at once found themselves in high favor. When the court moved back to Windsor, the king assigned them each £2 a week for maintenance, and a little later he ordered the Admiralty to place the ship *Eaglet* at their disposal for a voyage to Hudson Bay. His

Majesty also presented each of them with a gold chain and a medal and commended them graciously to the "gentleman adventurers of Hudson's Bay." Foremost among these, and one of their most enthusiastic friends, was that gallant old soldier and sailor Prince Rupert, the king's cousin, whose love of adventure and desire of repairing his fortunes led him to lend his great influence to the undertaking. Other courtiers and some wealthy merchants of London, who had now become interested in the venture, added to the *Eaglet* a second ship, the *Nonsuch*, under Captain Gillam. During the winter of 1667–68 the little knot of "merchant adventurers" held many a close conference at the Goldsmiths' Hall or at Whitehall and put their heads together over many a merry banquet at the Three Tunns Tavern and the Sun Coffee House. At last, after the consumption of "divers pipes of canary" and "dinners with pullets," and after much making merry "like right worthy gentlemen" the expedition stood ready at the Gravesend docks to set forth upon that enterprise which was to build for Britain in the New World an empire almost as large as Europe itself.

Their instructions are quaint and interesting. "You are to saile," they run, "with the first wind that presents itself, keeping company with each other to your place of rendezvous. You are to saile to such place as Mr Gooseberry (the English name for Grosseilliers) and Mr Radisson shall direct to trade with the Indians there. You are to have in your thought the discovery of the passage into

the South Sea and to attempt it with the advice and direction of Mr Gooseberry and Mr Radisson. Lastly, we advise and require you to use the said Mr Gooseberry and Mr Radisson with all manner of civility and courtesy and to take care that all your company doe bear a particular respect unto them, they being the persons upon whose credit wee have undertaken this expedition.

"Which we beseech Almighty God to prosper

"Signed — Rupert Albemarle
Craven G. Carterett
J. Hayes P. Colleton"

And now Grosseilliers and Radisson had left behind kings and courts, cities and greedy, plotting merchants. The fresh, salt air of the sea was in their nostrils, and their faces were set towards that life of the wild, free woods which they loved. But disappointment was in store for one of them. Fierce storms arose. The little *Nonsuch*, with hatches battened down and head held firmly to the wind, rode light as a cork over the great billows. Not so the heavier and more unwieldy *Eaglet*. Wave after wave caught her broadside on, and, when the storm subsided, she was left with her decks sprung, her masts by the board, and her consort lost There was nothing for it but to turn back, and late in September, 1668, the *Eaglet*, with the chafing Radisson aboard, limped lamely into dock in the Thames.

In the meanwhile Grosseilliers and Gillam on the *Nonsuch* made a quick and easy passage into the Bay, reaching

Digges Island on August 19th. For seven weeks they coasted due south and then came to anchor in a bay off a river mouth. They called the river Rupert River in honor of their princely patron, and the rude, stockaded log fort which they hurriedly built on shore they named Fort Charles, after the king. They were the first to penetrate to this remote corner of the Great Bay since Hudson's famous voyage of 1610–11, and Fort Charles on the east shore of James Bay was the first permanent post to be erected on Canada's great North Sea. Such was the humble beginning of that Trading Company which was to fight out bloody feuds with French and Canadian rivals, whose imperial power was destined to expand until it embraced half the continent, and which to-day, after the passage of two hundred and fifty years, is still active and prosperous.

That rigorous, biting winter that had been so terrible to Hudson and other early voyagers did not daunt in the least Grosseilliers, the forest ranger, and Gillam, the New Englander. The ship was beached on a sand bar and protected from ice jams by barriers of logs. They had an abundance of stores, firewood was at hand for the cutting, and through the long northern winter they lived snugly enough in their fort.

From previous explorers the Indians had hung suspiciously aloof, but Grosseilliers on his snowshoes visited their distant encampments. He found that they were Crees, like those Indians with whom he and Radisson had traded on the shores of Lake Superior. Thus, knowing

their ways and readily speaking their tongue, he soon won their friendship. A brisk trade in furs sprang up, and when, in the spring of 1669, the ice broke up and the little *Nonsuch* spread her sails for England, she carried that within her hold which was calculated to make glad the hearts of her "merchant adventurer" masters.

Just how rich the cargo of the *Nonsuch* was we do not know, for there is no record left. But we do know that it was such as to cause the owners to apply to the king with the utmost dispatch and secrecy for a royal charter granting them the sole right to all trade and rule in the regions about Hudson Bay. The venture had been successful. The "adventurers" must now be formally organized, and their position must be made secure. On May 2nd, 1670, King Charles granted a charter incorporating "The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay."

At the head of the charter stand the names of the applicants, among them Prince Rupert, the Duke of Albemarle, the Earl of Craven, Lord Arlington, Lord Ashley, Sir Philip Carteret, Sir Robert Viner, Lord Mayor of London, and other noblemen and merchants. "Whereas," runs the famous document, "these have at their own great cost and charges undertaken an expedition for Hudson's Bay for the discovery of a passage to the South Sea and for trade, and have humbly besought us to incorporate them and to grant unto them and their successors the whole trade and commerce of all those seas, straits, bays, rivers, creeks and sounds in whatsoever latitude that lie

within the entrance of the straits called Hudson's Straits together with all the lands, countries and territories upon the coasts and confines of the seas, straits, bays, lakes, rivers, creeks and sounds not actually possessed by the subjects of any other Christian State, know ye that we have given, granted, ratified, and confirmed" the said grant. "And furthermore," it continues, "of our own ample and abundant grace we have granted not only the whole, entire and only liberty of trade to and from the territories aforesaid, but also the whole and entire trade to and from all havens, bays, creeks, rivers, lakes, and seas unto which they shall find entrance either by water or by land out of the territories aforesaid."

The shareholders of the mighty Company thus formed were bound by a strict oath of faithfulness and secrecy. "I doe sweare," so it ran, "to be true and faithful to ye Comp'y of Adventurers; ye secrets of ye said Comp'y I will not disclose, nor trade to ye limits [limitation] of ye said Comp'y's charter. So help me God." Like oaths of fidelity were exacted from the employees of the Company. The shareholders elected to conduct the Company's affairs a Governing Committee and a Governor. The first Governor was Prince Rupert; the second, James, Duke of York, later James II; the third, Lord Churchill, afterwards the famous Duke of Marlborough.

Thus the Merry Monarch, with royal munificence, granted to his friends a vaster domain than any one then dreamed of. Under the warrant of this royal charter the dominion of the Company was to spread north and west

and south from the shores of Hudson Bay, till it met the power of Russia in distant Alaska and at last reached the Southern Sea in far off California. Over this vaguely defined region which the Company might penetrate, it was given wide powers of government. It could build forts, employ seamen, make laws and punish for the breach of them. It could also expel and punish poachers on its trading rights. It could even make war upon any "Prince or People whatsoever that are not Christians for the benefit of the said Company and its trade." Over all their territory the Governor and Company were to be "true and absolute lords," with the obligation of paying in sign of allegiance to the king of England whenever he should visit their domains "two elks and two black beaver."

At the head of this royal charter of trade and government which for two hundred years was to mold the destiny of half of North America there stood the names of noble lords and London merchant princes. But though they have the pride of place, it is not rightly theirs. It is true the courtier lent his influence and the merchant risked his gold — and these were necessary things. But the greatness of the Great Company has other and deeper foundations than these. At the head of its charter should really stand the names of the men in whose minds the project had its birth and by whose dauntless courage it was carried out in the wilds of the New World. Though history has long slighted and neglected them, none the less the real founders of the Hudson's Bay Company were the two

penniless but resolute French adventurers, Chouart des Grosseilliers and Pierre Radisson.

VI. *Radisson and Grosseilliers Fight the Company*

Though dissatisfied with the slight recognition that had been given them, yet Grosseilliers and Radisson continued in the Company's service and in June, 1670, they were off once more for the Bay, with three ships, the *Wavèno*, the *Shaftesbury Pink*, and the *Prince Rupert*. Radisson seems to have been the general superintendent of trade, of which Fort Charles was the chief centre. But in 1670, coasting westward in the little *Wavèno*, Radisson came to that point where the two great rivers, the Nelson and the Hayes, pour their waters side by side into the Bay. His quick eye at once saw that this was a stategic point. Down these rivers came the Crees and the Assiniboines each spring from the region of Superior and the Lake of the Woods. Here too was a commodious double harbor, where whole fleets of ships might ride at easy anchorage. This was the best place on the entire Bay for the head-quarters of the fur trade, and Radisson at once landed on the tongue of land between the river mouths and there erected the arms of the English king. A little later a rude fort was constructed, and a prosperous trade began.

But in 1672 and 1673 it was observed with alarm by the English at Fort Charles that fewer and fewer Indians were coming down the rivers to trade. What could be the reason? It was soon discovered that the French were pushing north from Canada, intercepting the Indians on

their way to the Bay, and offering them better prices for their furs. Growing angry and suspicious, some of the English traders began to charge Grosseilliers and Radisson, who had received some letters from Canada, with being in secret league with their rivals. The two Frenchmen, on their part, resolved to return to England and lay the whole matter before the Company.

It is quite possible that the letters from Canada to Radisson and Grosseilliers did hold out tempting offers for their services, for they pressed the Company of Adventurers firmly for better terms. At last, after long debate, the Governing Committee voted that "there be allowed to Mr Radisson £100 per annum in consideration of services, out of which shall be deducted what hath already been paid him; and if it pleases God to bless the Company with good success hereafter that they come to be in a prosperous condition, then they will reassume consideration." Thus at the very time when the Company was making profits of from fifty to one hundred per cent, it refused to the men who had laid the foundation of its fortunes the position of shareholders. It would treat them only as servants and pay them a mere pittance for a wage. Ingratitude could not go further. In the fall of 1674 Grosseilliers and Radisson left England and returned to France.

Till 1679 Radisson served as an officer in the French Navy, but his promotion to high command was barred by the fact that his loyalty was suspected because he had married an English lady, the daughter of Sir John Kirke, a prominent shareholder in the Company of Adventurers.

Then, too, the spell of the woods was ever strong upon him, so when, in 1679, he met La Chesnaye, an old friend and fur trader, who proposed to equip a French expedition to compete with the English on Hudson Bay, Radisson at once fell in with the scheme.

Soon we find him in Canada completing arrangements with Grosseilliers, who had been living quietly for some time at Three Rivers. Jean Chouart, Grosseilliers' son, joined his father and uncle in the adventure. The two explorers spent the winter of 1681–82 in Acadia, and then in the spring went with the fishing fleet to Isle Percée, whither La Chesnaye had promised to send the ships for the expedition. In July they arrived — but what ships! The *St. Pierre*, named after Radisson, a sloop of fifty tons, and the *Ste. Anne*, an even smaller vessel, were both poorly built to buffet the northern ice, and were manned by only twenty-five seamen who were both mutinous and inexperienced. Men of less heroic temper would have turned back, but not so the two French voyageurs. At once heading for the north, they passed through Belle Isle, coasted the treacherous Labrador, and entered the icy maelstrom of Hudson Strait. "Wee had," writes Radisson, "much adoe to recover out of the ice, and had like divers times to have perished, but God was pleased to preserve us." Twice the crews mutinied, but each time the courage and tact of Radisson met the crisis, and they continued their course. By August 26th they had cleared the Strait, crossed the Bay, and had come to anchor at the mouth of a great river which the Indians called

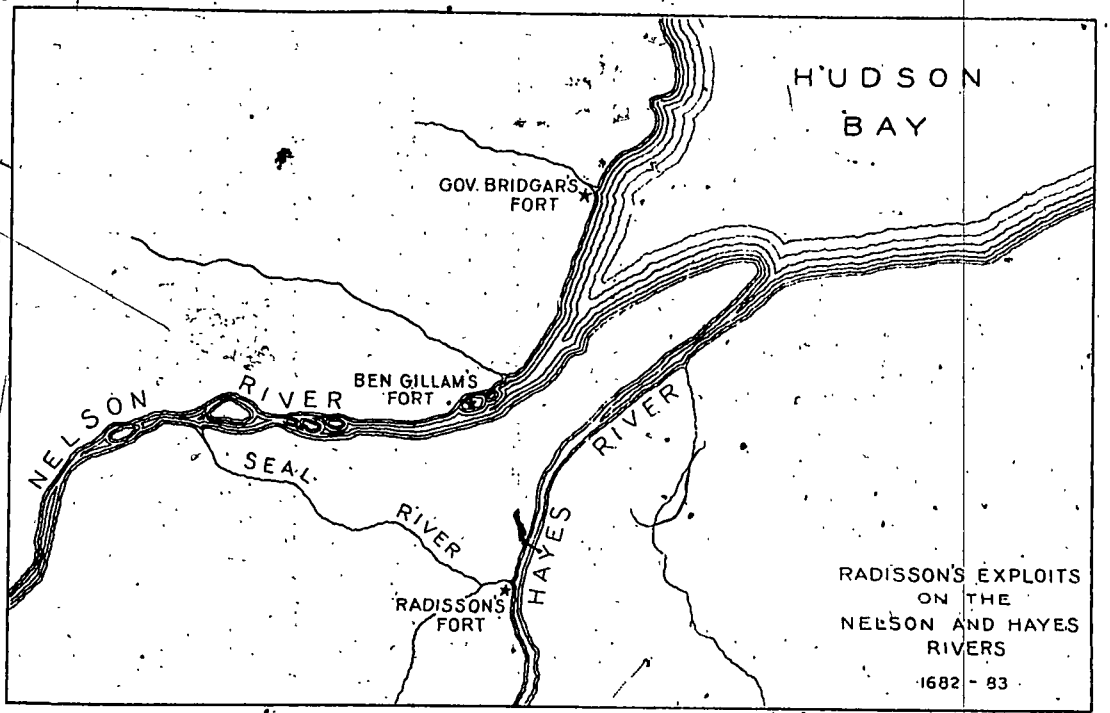
Ka-Kiwa-Kiouay, "Who comes, who goes," referring to the ebb and flow of the tide. This was no other than the Hayes River. A few miles to the north lay the Nelson. It was this ideal situation, which Radisson had before visited and claimed for the English king, that he now claimed for France and resolved to make the seat of the French fur trade on the Bay.

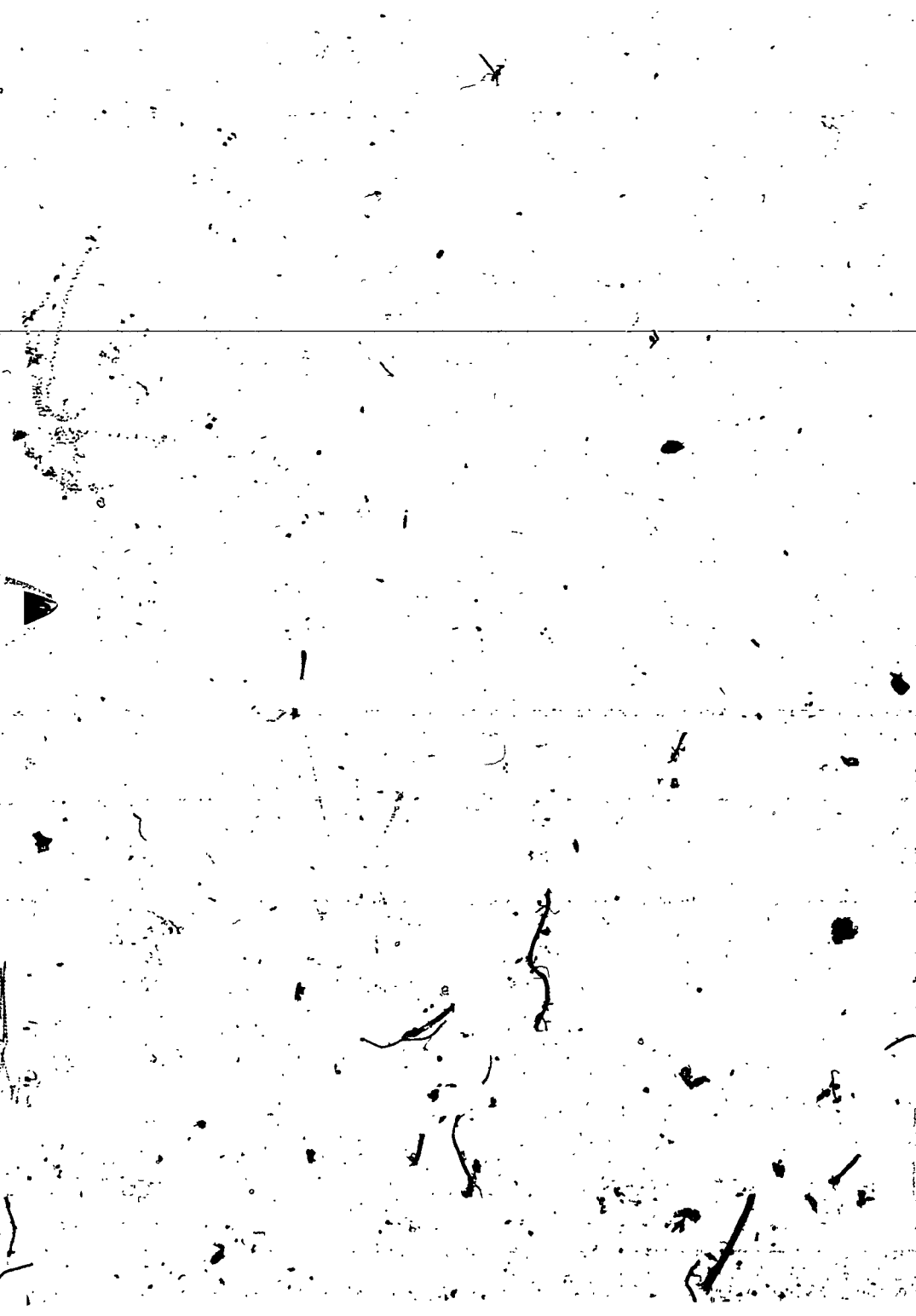
They sailed up the Hayes River about fifteen miles, and then in a creek on the north shore made their ships snug for the winter. While Grosseilliers took charge of the erection of a fort, which in honor of the French king they called Fort Bourbon, Radisson and Jean canoed up the river for about fifty miles to get into touch with the Indians. After eight days they met a party under an old chief. His greeting was friendly. Armed with spear, club, and bow, he stood up in his canoe, drew an arrow from his quiver, and, having aimed it to the east, west, north, and south, he broke it in two in token of peace and cast it into the river. Then he burst out into a chant of greeting —

"Ho, young-man, be not afraid!
The sun is favorable to us!
Our enemies shall fear us!
This is the man we have wished
Since the days of our fathers."

Radisson with great readiness at once replied in Cree —

"I know all the earth!
Your friends shall be my friends!


HUDSON
BAY
GOV. BRIDGAR'S
FORT
BEN GILLAM'S
FORT
NELSON RIVER
SEAL
RIVER
HAYES
RIVER
RADISSON'S
FORT
RADISSON'S EXPLOITS
ON THE
NELSON AND HAYES
RIVERS
1682 - 83



I come to bring you arms to destroy your enemies!
Nor wife nor child shall die of hunger!
For I have brought you merchandise!
Be of good cheer!
I will be thy son!
I have brought thee a father!
He is yonder below building a fort
Where I have two great ships!"[1]

Gifts were exchanged, vows of eternal friendship were pledged, and the Indians promised to bring all their furs down to the fort. With this happy beginning made for their trade, Radisson and Jean rejoined their companions. One day, however, when they were all busily at work, what was their surprise to hear the boom of cannon suddenly echoing through the wilderness. Who could it be? They must find out quickly, for in the fur trade every stranger was a rival and probably a foe. Radisson took canoe and glided cautiously down the Hayes to the Bay. Nothing there. The ship, then, must have ascended the other river, the Nelson. Further firing of cannon, intended no doubt to attract the Indians for trade, confirmed this guess.

Returning at once to the fort, Radisson selected three of his trustiest men. The creek, on which the *St. Pierre* and *Ste. Anne* lay, ran across the marshy neck of land

[1] Agnes Laut has thus arranged these speeches in rhythmic form in imitation of the Indian manner of chanting a speech. For this story in greater detail see her books, the "Pathfinders of the West" and the "Conquest of the Great North West."

between the Hayes and the Nelson and joined the two rivers. Paddling and portaging along this stream the little party reached the Nelson and then stole silently down towards its mouth. Halfway to the Bay they came upon the stranger anchored at Seal Island, on which a rough fort was already under construction. She was a stout ship called the *Bachelor's Delight*, well manned, and armed to the teeth with cannon which bristled through her portholes.

Radisson saw in a flash that he could not openly fight the newcomer. He must have recourse to stratagem. A parley soon revealed the fact that the *Bachelor's Delight* was not a ship of the English Company, but a New Englander illegally poaching in the Company's territories. She was commanded by Ben Gillam, son of that Zachariah Gillam who was one of the Company's most trusted Captains. Was it possible that they were conspiring together to cheat the Adventurers?

By instinct Radisson saw that the boldest course was the safest. He introduced himself and fearlessly went aboard. The two commanders drank each other's health. Radisson posed as the leader of a large expedition from Canada. He had a big party and a large fort inland and had won the allegiance of the Indians. Gillam might remain safely under his protection, and neither soldiers nor Indians would molest him or his men so long as they did not stray far from the ship. Thus condescendingly Radisson spoke. "We parted after that," he says, "well satisfied with each other, he fully convinced that I had the

force of which I had boasted, and I resolved to keep him in this good opinion, having the design to oblige him to retire, or if he persisted in annoying me in my trade, to await a favorable opportunity of seizing his ship."

But troubles thickened. So that Gillam might not know in what direction his camp lay, Radisson continued his way down the Nelson, when, to his amazement, at its mouth he beheld a full-rigged ship flying the Company's colors and commencing to ascend the river. At all costs the two English parties must be kept apart, for if they joined together the French would be completely outnumbered and at their mercy. Landing unperceived on the south shore, Radisson and his men built a great bonfire as though they were Indians signalling the ship to stop and trade. This trick succeeded. The vessel reefed sails and came to anchor.

Next morning a boat was sent ashore. In it were Captain Zachariah Gillam and John Bridgar, the new Governor, sent out in the ship *Prince Rupert* to found a permanent Hudson's Bay post on the Nelson River. When, instead of Indians, they found Radisson and his men on the beach with loaded muskets levelled at their heads they were dumbfounded. Radisson played the same game as before. He introduced his three men as the captains of large ambushed parties. He went aboard the English ship and dined as though the forces at his back were so strong that he had nothing to fear. He parted from them in friendly fashion, advising them not to ascend the river farther for fear of conflict with the French and Indians. For his

part he would do his best to hold his men in check and restrain the natives. Again his boldness was rewarded. The English prepared to construct a fort and winter where they were. Thus for the time being the wily old Indian-fighter kept the two English forces apart. Only singly could he hope to crush them.

To make doubly sure, however, Radisson told young Gillam of the arrival of the Company's ship, and when he made his next visit to the *Prince Rupert*, with the coolest daring he took Ben along with him in disguise to see his father. The son could now be trusted to prevent his men from straying down the Nelson towards the Company's ship, while the father to prevent the detection and punishment of his son would see to it that the Company's men did not penetrate up the river to the poachers' fort.

For a time this worked well. Then a disaster occurred. The *Prince Rupert*, caught in the drive of tidal ice at the river mouth, was crushed like an eggshell and sunk. With her went down Captain Zachariah Gillam, fourteen men, and nearly all the provisions.

Young Gillam now no longer needed to fear the Company's force, while he was becoming extremely suspicious of the strength of the French. To spy out their numbers he expressed a desire to pay them a friendly visit. Radisson craftily consented, and in person went to escort him. For a month young Gillam enjoyed the hospitality of the French. They treated him courteously, but he became more and more insolent as he discovered their weak-

ness. Then he tried to depart — only to find himself a prisoner. The young spy himself had been trapped by an older and slyer hand at the game of war.

The next step was to capture the poacher's ship and fort by surprise. As Gillam watched Radisson preparing to set out through the winter woods with his handful of men, he sneered at their foolhardiness.

"Had you a hundred men instead of twenty," he said, "you might have some chance."

"How many are in the fort?" demanded the angered Radisson.

"Nine," he replied, "and they could kill forty of you before you could reach the palisade."

"Choose you an equal number of my men, myself included," cried Radisson, "and I promise to give a good account both of you and your ship in two days."

Gillam at once complied, and Radisson with eight men at his back set out on his perilous undertaking. Half a league from the fort two of the men were sent ahead. They were to tell the sentries that Radisson and Gillam were coming a little distance behind. Thus they would gain entrance to the fort, and with the French hostage, who had been left there to guarantee Gillam's safety, they were to watch the guardhouse and keep the gate open for the entry of Radisson's party, which would be at hand to rush in by surprise. The plan was completely successful. The fort was in French possession before the garrison could even resist, and the ship was won by a like bloodless victory.

In the meanwhile Bridgar had learned of the ship and the fort above him on the Nelson River. At first he thought that they belonged to the French, but now he learned that they were really those of an English poacher. But they were at least English, and here was his chance to overpower the French. Gathering his ragged, half-starved forces together, he made the march up the river to join hands with his countrymen. At his summons the fort gates swung back and he and his men marched in — only to hear the doors clash to behind them and to find themselves surrounded and overpowered by the French.

Radisson was now complete master of the situation. But he was as humane and honorable in his hour of triumph as he had been cunning and bold in the hour of danger. He fed Bridgar's famishing men from his own stores. When the Crees and Assiniboines came down to the Bay in the spring and found sixty Englishmen in the hands of a score of Frenchmen, they offered Radisson two hundred beaver skins to be allowed to massacre the prisoners. But he stood the savages off. Some of the prisoners were sent in the *Ste. Anne* to the Company's posts in the south on James Bay. The *St. Pierre* had been wrecked in the spring ice, so the remaining prisoners were placed in Gillam's ship, the *Bachelor's Delight*, in which the voyage back to Quebec was to be made.

All winter Grosseilliers and his son had been driving a profitable trade, and in the spring the Indians from the

south came in with a great wealth of furs. These were safely stowed in the hold, and then, leaving Jean with a small party to hold the fort and continue the trade, Grosseilliers and Radisson set sail for New France. Once again they had performed prodigies of valor and endurance in the wilderness. Once more they came to anchor beneath the citadel of Quebec with a vast fortune in furs as their reward.

VII. *Radisson Returns to England*

Always success and prosperity seemed to wait upon the explorers in the wilds, only to forsake them when they returned to civilization and began to deal with merchants, governments, and kings. Though the king himself had given verbal sanction to their expedition, yet it had been undertaken without formal license from the government of New France. Therefore the grasping Governor, De la Barre, urged on by jealous fur-trading rivals, confiscated their furs and restored the *Bachelor's Delight* to Gillam. Moreover, while France and England were at peace they had attacked the English on the Bay. Therefore, they were summoned to give an account of themselves in Paris.

When they landed in France, the great statesman Colbert had died, and affairs had passed into the hands of lesser men. The influence of the Governor and of the rival merchants prevailed in the court, and all their petitions for justice were in vain. At last, wearied by the struggle, the older Grosseilliers gave it up and retired

to spend the rest of his days at his home in Three Rivers. But Radisson kept on. The French king had a secret treaty with England which he feared would be broken off if he backed up what the explorers had done. On the other hand, if he openly confessed that they had been wrong and punished them, it would mean the abandonment of all claims by France to trade in the Bay. So Radisson was ordered to return, as though by his own free will, and informally deliver up to the English the posts on the Hayes and the Nelson from which he had driven them. Thus Louis hoped at the same time to be able to preserve his secret treaty with England and maintain France's claim to share in the trade of the Bay.

But for Radisson, robbed time and again of his hardly won profits, to be asked in addition to undo that which he had done for the honor and glory of France was too bitter a task. The ingratitude of his king and his country made him heartsick. Then, too, in England were his wife and four children whom he loved dearly, while the Hudson's Bay Company, through the English ambassador, was making constant efforts to recover him for its service.

Lord Preston sent one of his officers, Captain Godey, to call upon Radisson. He found the adventurer on the third floor of a house in the Faubourg St. Antoine. His lodgings were decked with numerous trophies and relics of his American voyages, while a group of boon companions were busy drinking his health and listening to the story of his adventures. "Radisson himself," Godey says, "was apparelled more like a savage than a Chris-

tian. His black hair, just touched with gray, hung in a wild profusion about his bare neck and shoulders. He showed a swart complexion, scarred and pitted by frost and exposure in a rigorous climate. A huge scar, wrought by the tomahawk of a drunken Indian, disfigured his left cheek. His whole costume was surmounted by a wide collar of marten's skin; his feet were adorned by buckskin moccasins. In his leather belt was sheathed a long knife." Such was the picture of Radisson the ranger in 1684 — a strange, rugged, Western figure upon whom the people of that day must have gazed with surprise and curiosity, as he stalked through the streets of London and Paris and waited upon the courts of Windsor and Versailles.

Stung by the trickery and ingratitude of the French and won back by the liberal promises of the English Company, Radisson now resolved to leave France. On May 10th, 1684, he landed in London. His first act was to take the oath of allegiance to the English king — an oath which to the day of his death he kept unbroken.

Well might the Merchant Adventurers rejoice that Radisson had returned to their service. He had shown that the two Frenchmen who had founded their Company could as easily undermine its position. Now with Radisson once more on their side, they felt the future assured. The Governing Committee met and voted him £100 per annum and the dividends on £200 of stock which often ran as high as fifty per cent. He was presented with a purse for "his extraordinary services to their great liking

and satisfaction." A dealer was commanded to "keep Mr Radisson in stock of fresh provisions." A gift of a "hogshead of claret" was sent him, while in token of the high esteem of the Adventurers he was begged to accept a silver tankard of the value of more than £10. He was received in audience by the king himself, and was taken by the Duke of York into the royal box at the theatre. For a while Radisson was one of the most noted men in all London.

"Skin for Skin," Coat of Arms and Motto: Hudson's Bay Company.

Radisson's response to fair and generous treatment was immediate. In a short time he was ready to start for the Bay with a fleet of three ships. There he induced young Jean Grosseilliers to abandon his fort, and everywhere on the Bay the power of the English Company was reëstablished. On Radisson's return in November he was publicly thanked and given a purse of one hundred guineas.

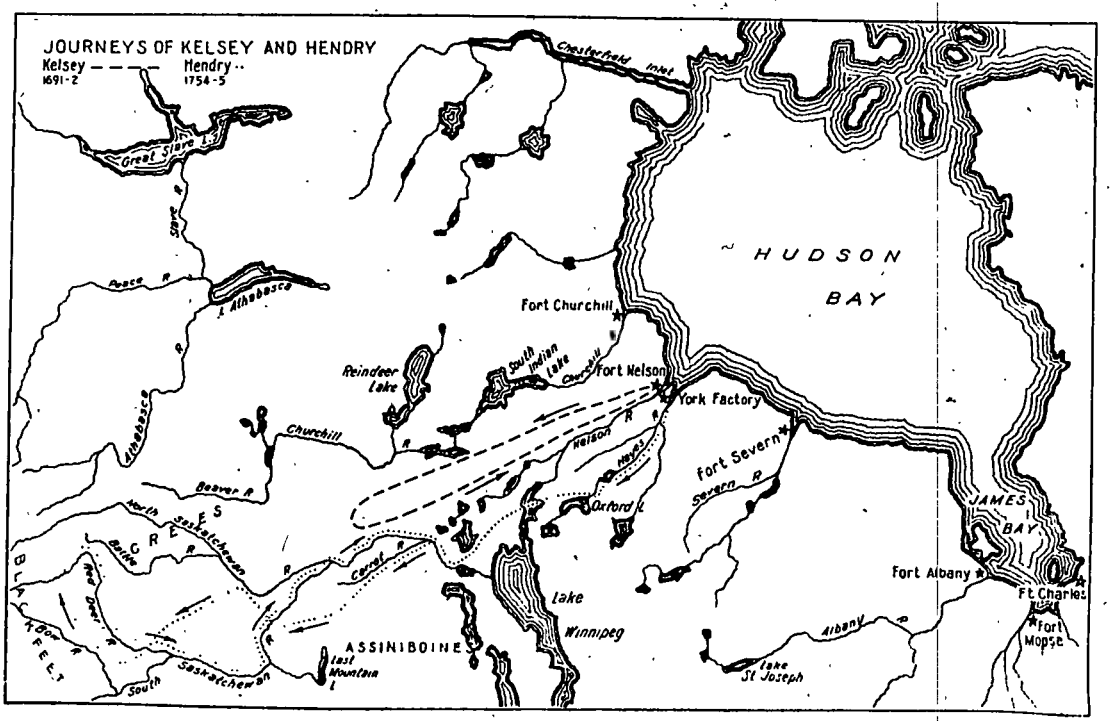
For ten years Radisson stood high in favor and continued to make trips for the Adventurers to Hudson Bay. Then came a change. War broke out with France after the fall of the Stuarts, and Radisson the Frenchman was held in distrust. The daring Canadian, D'Iberville, raided the Bay, and the Company's dividends ceased. New shareholders now controlled the Company's stock, few of whom knew the name and the deeds of Radisson. His pension was cut in half. He was an old man now, but he remained to the end a fighter. He sued the Company in the courts

and won. His salary and all the arrears were paid in full, but that was reward meagre enough for all his services. Till 1710 the books of the Company show that Radisson's pension was regularly paid. Then in the minute book of the Governing Committee we find the entry, "Att a Comitte the 12th July, 1710 — The Secretary is ordered to pay Mr Radisson's widow as charity the sum of £6." The tireless old rover of the woods and sea had gone forth on his last long journey.

No soaring monument marks the last resting place of Radisson or of Grosseilliers — though lesser men have such. But that is just as well, for a wise old Greek statesman, Pericles, has truly said that "the whole earth is the sepulcher of famous men," and that the memorials of them are "graven not on stone but in the hearts of mankind." The mighty regions which they pioneered, the imperial Company which they really founded — these form their most fitting monument.

HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY COINS, MADE OF LEAD MELTED FROM TEA CHESTS AT YORK FACTORY, EACH COIN REPRESENTING SO MANY BEAVER SKINS.

HENRY KELSEY


JOURNEYS OF KELSEY AND HENDRY
Kelsey
1691-2
Hendry
1754-5
Chesterfield Inlet
Great Slave L.
Slave R.
Peace R.
L. Athabasca
HUDSON BAY
Fort Churchill
Reindeer Lake
South Indian Lake
Churchill R.
Fort Nelson
York Factory
Churchill
Nelson R.
Hayes R.
Fort Severn
Severn R.
Beaver R.
North Saskatchewan R.
Battle R.
Red Deer R.
Bow R.
South Saskatchewan R.
Carrot R.
ASSINIBOINE
Last Mountain L.
Lake Winnipeg
Oxford L.
JAMES BAY
Fort Albany
Ft Charles
Fort Moose
Albany R.
Lake St Joseph

CHAPTER III

HENRY KELSEY

On May 17th, 1684, Radisson, as we have seen, sailed in the *Happy Return* to reëstablish the English Company in their fort on the Nelson River which he and Grosseilliers had seized. In the selfsame ship was a little lad, Henry Kelsey, who was destined to be the pioneer explorer inland from Hudson Bay. Henry was a poor boy who had grown up in the streets of London. The Company, in search of 'prentice lads for service at their posts in the Bay, had picked him off the streets and taken him into their employ at a salary of £8 a year and his keep.

Many an idle day in London Henry had haunted the wharves and dockyards of the Thames, watching with wistful eyes the ships as they set out on their long voyages to strange, foreign lands. From the old salts who gathered on the water-side, he had heard many a tale of pirates on the Spanish Main, of adventures in the far-off Indies, of slave-raiding on the coast of Africa, and of whale and seal fishing in the Polar Seas. What would he not have given to bear a part in such stirring deeds? And now he was actually off on a voyage of thousands of miles and in the same ship with the famous Frenchman, who had been received by the king and whose exploits had been the talk

of all London. Radisson had roamed and fought to his heart's content over half a continent. And now he, too, Henry Kelsey, London street arab, was bound for the great Bay which was the gateway to the land of the savage, painted redskin, the land of forest and stream, of hair-breadth adventure and of wonderful wealth from the fur trade.

To a rousing cheer the Company's flag, with its white-lettered "H. B. C.," flutters up to the masthead. An extra ration of grog is served around to put all in a good humor at the starting. The sailors chant their sea song as they run briskly round the capstan. The anchor thus hoisted aboard is made snug for the voyage. The sails are spread. The water begins to ripple gently backwards from the prow. Slowly the Gravesend docks begin to recede. Godspeeds are called out and farewells are waved, and the little denizen of the London streets is off into a new and wonderful world.

Little Henry had not lived by his wits in London for nothing. He was yet but a half-grown lad, and his face had not acquired the healthy bronze of the life of the sea and the woods, but he was irrepressibly active in body and mind. Soon he had searched out every nook and cranny in the entire vessel. He seemed to be everywhere about the ship, and nothing escaped his sharp eyes. Now he was aloft in the rigging, peering around the horizon for the sails of strange ships. Now he was down in the galley, coaxing the cook for dainties. He listened with eager ears to the tales of the seamen in the forecastle, and, sometimes,

as Radisson paced the deck, he caught fragments of his adventures as they fell from his lips in his queer-spoken English.

Everything in the voyage delighted him. After his first spell of seasickness was over, he loved to watch the little ship make her way over the shouldering billows — now engulfed in the trough between foam-capped summits, and, next moment, with the spray dashing over the bow and the scuppers awash, borne aloft like a cork towards the crest of an on-coming wave. The lengthening days, as the ship bore ever more to the north, filled him with wonder. He was the first to observe the marvellous sight of whales spouting in the distance, and the gambols of a school of porpoises that followed the ship caused him infinite merriment. When they entered the Strait, he was struck with amazement at the mountains of ice they encountered, drifting slowly out towards the ocean and flashing back the sun's rays from a thousand dazzling crystal points and surfaces. Past great ice floes on which an occasional polar bear was espied, past Digges Island with its myriad nesting wild fowl they went, and then south-west across the Bay, until they cast anchor in the mouth of the Nelson River.

It was a scene strangely different from that which the little lad had left behind him. Instead of the quiet estuary of the Thames, the swirling, muddy current of the rapid Nelson; instead of the peaceful, thatch-roofed villages, the green hedges and the cultivated fields of Kent and Essex, nothing but dreary swamp and sombre forest from the

water's edge far as the eye could see. Instead of London with its church spires, palaces, and theatres, its marts and warehouses, its maze of streets and busy thronging citizens — instead of these, a ruined fort in a little clearing on the shore, and all around a howling wilderness, the home of wild beasts and scattered, wandering savages.

But the prospect did not appall the little apprentice lad in the least. He was one of those happy spirits that make themselves at home everywhere. He was all excited to land and begin work, and he took his full boy's share in the erection of the new fort and the preparations for trade with the natives.

Then came the Indians — the Assiniboines from the great Saskatchewan Valley — sweeping down the swift current of the Nelson with their canoes loaded deep with furs. Trade, in those days, was no simple matter. First the Governor would adorn himself in all the finery of scarlet coat and gold lace, and gird on his sword at his side. Then all the musicians that the fort could muster were marshalled in front of the Governor, whose approach was thus heralded by the blaring of bugles, the screaming of fifes, and the thunderous roll of kettledrums. Behind, drawn up fully armed in martial array, came all the Company's men. Proceeding thus with full pomp to the Indian encampment, the Governor gave greeting to the chief and his tribesmen, and the conference began. The chief, with great professions of friendship, would present all his furs, beaver and marten and fox, to the Governor as a gift, while the latter responded with an equivalent gift of guns,

powder, shot, blankets, hatchets, beads, and other such trinkets drawn from the Company's stores. Both then puffed clouds of smoke from the peace pipe, and the two parties went their ways satisfied.

But the rules of the Company's trade and the discipline of its forts were exceedingly strict; none but the Governor or chief trader could thus conduct trade. All others of the Company's men were absolutely forbidden to hold any converse with the Indians or to leave the fort to hunt with them except by special permission. Only thus, the Adventurers thought, could they control all the trade and keep their employees from getting furs for themselves, thus cutting into their business.

But Kelsey was used to having his own way in the life of the London streets, and all these rules irked him sorely — not that he wished to cheat the Company and trade for himself, but because, boy-like, he was full of curiosity about this new land and its people. So he lost no opportunity to slip away from the fort and mix with the Indians, whose friendship he soon won. They were delighted with the audacious white boy, who did not stand aloof from them like the others, but visited them in their tepees, went for hunts with them in the forest, and was quickly learning to speak their tongue.

For some time this went on, either because Kelsey was clever enough to conceal his pranks or because Governor Geyer overlooked them on account of his youth. At last, however, the Governor grew angry and sternly forbade Kelsey to have anything more to do with the Indians. But

Henry again broke the rules, and, when the gates were locked, he even climbed over the fort palisades to visit his friends. For this the Governor, now in a rage, gave him a thorough thrashing.

But this proved too much. Henry liked his Assiniboine friends and their wild, free life better than Governor Geyer, his rules and his beatings. So, when the next day dawned, no Kelsey appeared for his duties. High and low they looked for him through the fort, and they sought in the neighboring forest, but nowhere was he to be found. He had vanished! The untracked wilderness had swallowed him into its depths, and his friends at the fort gave him up for lost.

Months passed and there came not a word of the adventurous lad. The French king and his Governor at Quebec had now fully realized that if the English retained their hold on the Bay, New France would be hemmed in both north and south by their power. So, though England and France were as yet at peace, in the summer of 1686 a party of daring *coureurs de bois*, under the Chevalier de Troyes and the dashing young French-Canadian, Pierre Le Moyne D'Iberville, made the long journey across the Height of Land and swooped suddenly down on the Bay. The English were completely surprised. Fort Moose, Fort Rupert, and Fort Albany all fell into the hands of the French, and Nelson alone was left to the English Company.

Long ago Radisson and Grosseilliers had urged the Adventurers not to remain content with posts on the shores of the Bay, but to penetrate far afield to the very heart

of the surrounding regions. Forts planted there would both increase the Company's trade and make firm its grip on the vast empire which King Charles had granted them. But their plea had fallen on deaf ears. Now, however, with three of their four forts in the hands of the French, the Company, in order still to get furs, must either build new posts inland or send far into the interior and persuade more and more Indian tribes to come down with their pelts to Fort Nelson. But who, of all the Company's servants, had the knowledge and daring to accomplish successfully this task?

Such was the situation when an Indian runner arrived from inland at the fort. He bore a piece of birch bark on which were some weatherworn characters roughly written with charcoal. The words were English. It was a message from Henry Kelsey. He was alive and well and had wandered far with the Indians. If the Governor would only pardon him and let him come back, he would conduct an exploring party for the Company and would bring down to its fort many new tribes.

The Governor was overjoyed. Kelsey's pardon was instantly dispatched. A little later he himself arrived at the fort. Tall as a man he now was, and keen-eyed, hardy, and bronzed from his life in the woods. Decked out in all the trappings of an Indian brave, he stepped from his canoe amid the warm greetings of his old friends at the fort. But he was not alone. Close behind came a dusky Assiniboine maiden, whom he had married by Indian rites. At first the Governor would not let her enter the gates, but

Kelsey stood by his wife and refused to enter alone. He was too valuable a man for the Company to lose. Governor Geyer relented, and so Mr. and Mrs. Kelsey, as they were laughingly styled, were received together into the fort.

Henry Kelsey was now the hero of the hour at Fort Nelson. Word of his exploits was sent back to England, and in 1688 we find the Adventurers sending out orders to Governor Geyer to dispatch "the boy, Henry Kelsey" to Churchill River, "because we are informed he is a very active lad, delighting much in Indians' company, being never better pleased than when he is travelling amongst them." There is no further record of what Kelsey did at Churchill, but probably he was sent to that river, where as yet there was no fort, to bring the northern Chipewyan Indians down to Fort Nelson for trade.

In 1691, however, Governor Geyer writes, "This summer I sent up Henry Kelsey, who cheerfully undertook the journey, into the country of the Assinae Poets (the Assiniboines) with the Captain of that nation (that is, its Chief), to call, encourage, and invite the remoter Indians to a trade with us." Of this journey, the most important achievement of his career, Kelsey has left us his own record, which still may be seen at Hudson's Bay House in London.

On July 15th, 1691, a fleet of canoes shot out from behind Deering's Point and began to stem the rapid current of the Nelson River. They were Stone or Assiniboine Indians, starting back on the long trip from Fort Nelson

to their home in the Saskatchewan Valley. They bore with them muskets and kettles and trinkets which they had obtained by trade at the white man's fort on the Bay. And with them, taking his turn with the rest at paddle and portage, was a solitary white man. It was Henry Kelsey, adventuring himself for a second time into the wilds to the west of Hudson Bay.

An Assiniboine Indian.

For three days they persevered against the strong current and then, impatient at their slow progress, Kelsey cached his canoe and went on alone overland ahead of his Indians. The weather was very dry, and game was exceedingly scarce. As he had to rely for food on what he could shoot, Kelsey was soon in a serious position. After thirty hot miles of tramping through the thick brush he stumbled at last on three Indian wigwams, but no one, man, woman, or child, was at home. The famishing hunter ransacked the encampment, but not a scrap of food could he find. A few berries gathered in the bush stayed his hunger a little, but it was with very great joy and relief that presently he heard noises in the distance. It was the owners of the tepees returning from hunting. They had shot ten swans and a moose and were ready to share with the tired traveller.

They also were Assiniboine Indians, and in their company

Kelsey journeyed on for eleven more days, until he rejoined his own party. With them now were some Crees, and these told him that the Naywatamee Poet Indians, whom Kelsey especially wished to meet and bring down to Fort Nelson for trade, had killed three Cree squaws in the spring, and the two nations were now at war with each other.

For more than three hundred miles Kelsey's path had lain through a forest country of spruce and pine. Now the trees changed to poplar and birch, gradually growing thinner, until the party reached the edge of the open plain. It was August 19th when they thus got clear of the woods and found, stretching southward and westward before them, the endless, rolling expanse of the prairie. Buffalo had been sighted on the preceding day, and now they were found roaming in such great herds that all fear of famine was over. During the day the men hunted, and at evening the women went out to bring in and prepare the meat for the feast.

A Monarch of the Plains.

Once, while out hunting, Kelsey fell asleep, exhausted by the chase afoot through the long grass of the plain. For hours he slumbered on, and when he awoke he was lost. Not a companion was in sight. The dust cloud, even,

raised by the hunters and buffalo, had settled again to the plain. Around him, waist high and as far as he could see, was nothing but the prairie grass, stirred into restless billows by the summer wind. He wandered hopelessly till dusk. Then the glare of the Indian camp fires in the sky gave him his direction, and, late at night, he struggled wearily into camp.

On another occasion, when the camp fire had been made of dry moss, Kelsey suddenly awoke to find the grass all around him alight and blazing furiously. Calling for help, he managed by desperate efforts to smother and beat out the flames, but the stock of his musket was badly burned. Kelsey, however, was not at a loss. With his knife he soon fashioned another, which did good service for the rest of the trip.

After travelling for seven days across the prairie they again came to a wooded land. It was here that Kelsey had his dangerous encounter with the grizzlies, the most formidable of all the beasts of the Great West. He was out hunting with an Indian when, all of a sudden, they were confronted by two immense bears. The bears were as much surprised as the men by the meeting. They advanced boldly, however, the fear of the rifle being unknown to them. The terrified Indian at once bolted for a tree, while Kelsey himself dashed into a clump of willows. The bears pursued the Indian to his tree, and it would have gone hard with him, had not Kelsey, by a lucky shot, killed one of them. The other now made in the direction of the white hunter, but unable to find him in the thick brush,

turned back again to attack the Indian, when, with a second shot, Kelsey stretched him beside his mate. Two grizzly bears were no small bag for a few minutes' hunting. Kelsey's credit now stood higher than ever with the Indians, who, filled with admiration for his prowess with the rifle, named him Miss-top-ashish, which means, "the Little Giant."

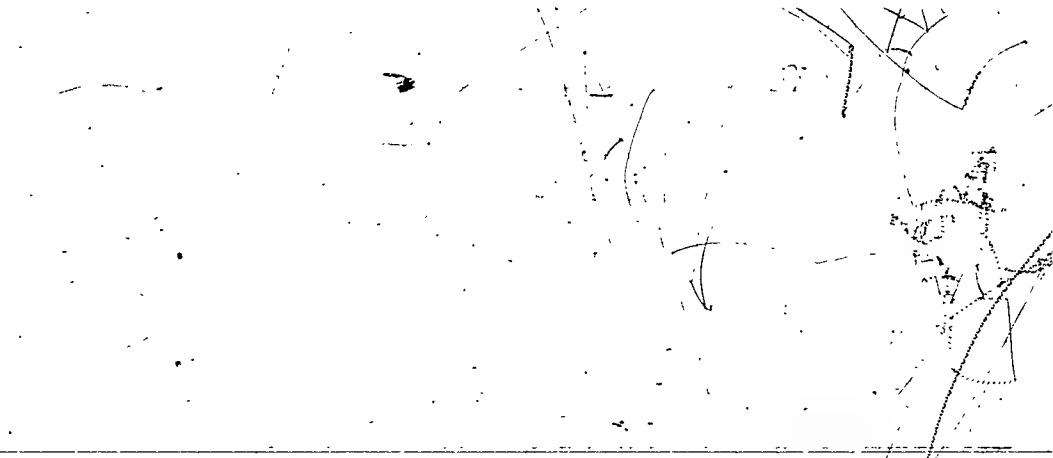
On August 24th they were joined by Wassha, a great chief of the Assiniboines, and the party now numbered upwards of eighty tepees. On September 11th they reached the camp of the long-sought Naywatamee Poets.

Kelsey pitched his tent, filled his great peace pipe with his best tobacco, and, with great ceremony, invited the Naywatamee chieftain to pay him a visit. The chief came in full state with his mightiest warriors at his back. On behalf of the Great White Chief of the Bay Kelsey presented him with gifts — a laced coat, a cap, a gay sash, a musket with powder and shot, knives, awls, and tobacco. With these the chief was hugely delighted and readily promised to meet his White Brother at Deering's Point in the spring, and go down to Fort Nelson for trade.

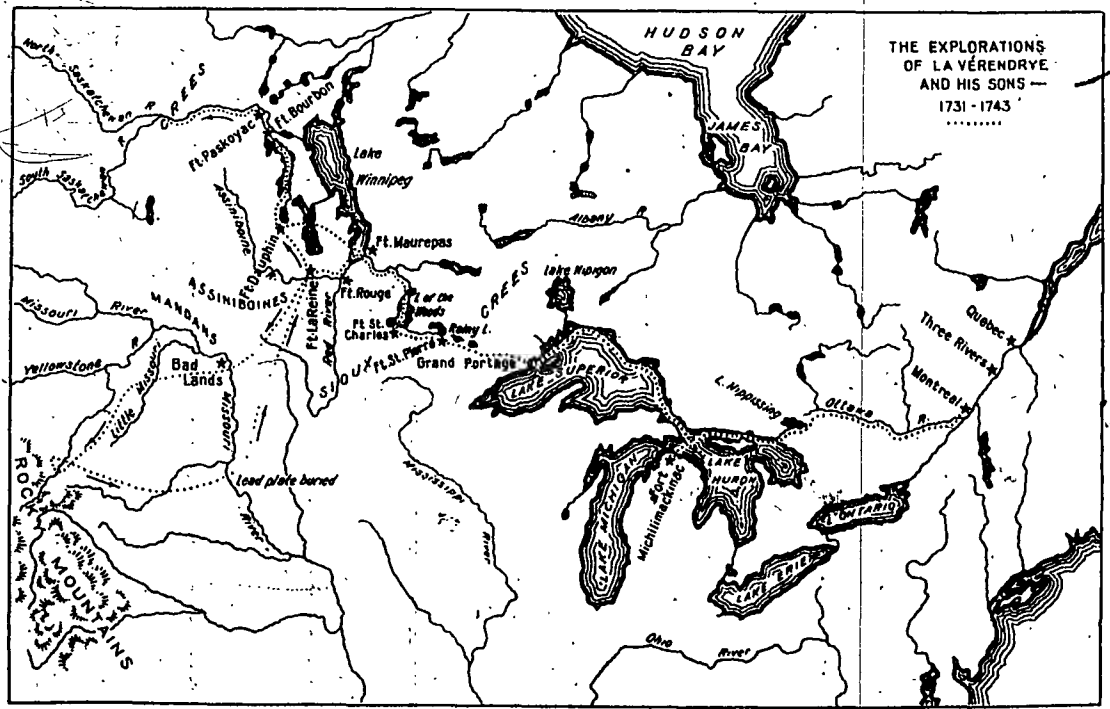
Kelsey had now travelled from five to six hundred miles inland from the Bay, and, as far as we can tell, was somewhere in what is now the Province of Saskatchewan, somewhat to the north of the great river. There, apparently, he passed the winter among the Indians, inviting all whom he met to trade with the Company and striving to make peace among the warring tribes. For the Adventurers wished the Indians to spend their powder and shot, not

on each other, but in the hunt for the furs from which the traders drew their wealth. Thus, in the spring of 1692, Governor Geyer wrote home to the Governing Committee in London: "Henry Kelsey came down with a good fleet of Indians and hath travelled and endeavored to keep the peace among them, according to my orders."

This successful exploit of the one-time street ragamuffin of London now won him rapid promotion. Of all the Company's men on the Bay he had the best knowledge of the land and the strongest control over the Indians. By 1697 he had risen to be Deputy Governor of Fort York at the mouth of the Hayes River, and in 1713 he was made Governor of York Factory and thus became second in command on the whole Bay. But his greatest claim to fame is that, except for Radisson and Grosseilliers, he was the first white man to explore any part of the great North-West, the first to visit the western Indian tribes, and the first to behold and hunt the buffalo, the mighty monarch of the plains. Though the Adventurers for many a long year yet were to rest content with forts on the shores of Hudson Bay, none the less the journeys of Henry Kelsey, "The Little Giant" of the Assiniboines, foreshadow the day when the Great Company was to wake from its slumber, shake off its sloth, and send its explorers and its trading bands to the uttermost confines of the vast territories which by royal grant and charter were theirs.



LA VÉRENDRYE AND HIS SONS


THE EXPLORATIONS OF LA VÉRENDRYE AND HIS SONS — 1731 - 1743
HUDSON BAY
JAMES BAY
Albany
Lake Winnipeg
Ft. Bourbon
Ft. Paskoyac
North Saskatchewan R.
South Saskatchewan R.
Assiniboine R.
Ft. Dauphin
Ft. Maurepas
Ft. Rouge
Ft. La Reine
Fort of the Prairies
Ft. St. Charles
Ft. St. Pierre
Grand Portage
Lake Nipigon
CREES
ASSINIBOINES
MANDANS
SIOUX
Missouri River
Yellowstone R.
Bad Lands
Little Missouri
Lead plate buried
ROCKY MOUNTAINS
LAKE SUPERIOR
LAKE MICHIGAN
Fort Michilimackinac
LAKE HURON
LAKE ERIE
ONTARIO
L. Nipissing
Ottawa R.
Quebec
Three Rivers
Montreal
Ohio River

CHAPTER IV

LA VÉRENDRYE AND HIS SONS

More than two hundred years ago, in the little town of Three Rivers on the banks of the great St. Lawrence, Pierre de la Vérendrye was born. He was a little French-Canadian lad, and his father was Governor of the French king's fort at Three Rivers. Pierre himself was but one of ten children, and among so many brothers and sisters he early learned to look out for himself and grew up a sturdy, self-reliant little fellow.

Those were the days when Canada was still only a thinly settled colony of France, and the dreaded Iroquois Indians might swoop down at any time on the settlements, burning and slaying as they went. To protect the people from these savage foes, Three Rivers had a strong wall, defended by cannon and a garrison of regular soldiers. It was no wonder, then, that little Pierre, as he played about the fort, should long to be a soldier too, when he grew up, and serve the king of France.

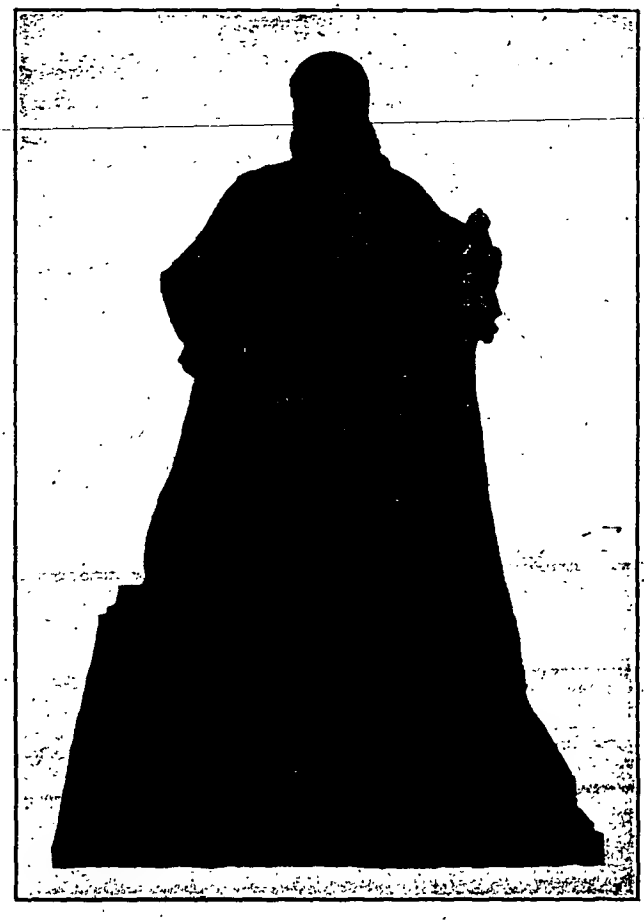
His wish soon came true. In 1697, when he was only twelve years old, he entered the French army as a cadet. At the age of nineteen he took part in a wild raid of French and Indians against the English colonies. Two years later he went to France, where he fought against the English

and Dutch in Flanders. In one terrible battle he received no less than nine wounds and was left for dead on the field. But happily he escaped with his life, and, for his bravery, he was raised to the rank of lieutenant.

After the war La Vérendrye returned to Canada. A long peace followed, and, as there was little chance of advance in the army, he took up the life of a fur trader. He married Mademoiselle Dandonneau, the daughter of a French gentleman, and they made their home on an island in the St. Lawrence, near Three Rivers. There four sons were born, who were to be the companions and helpers of their father in his great work of exploring the mysterious country of the Far West.

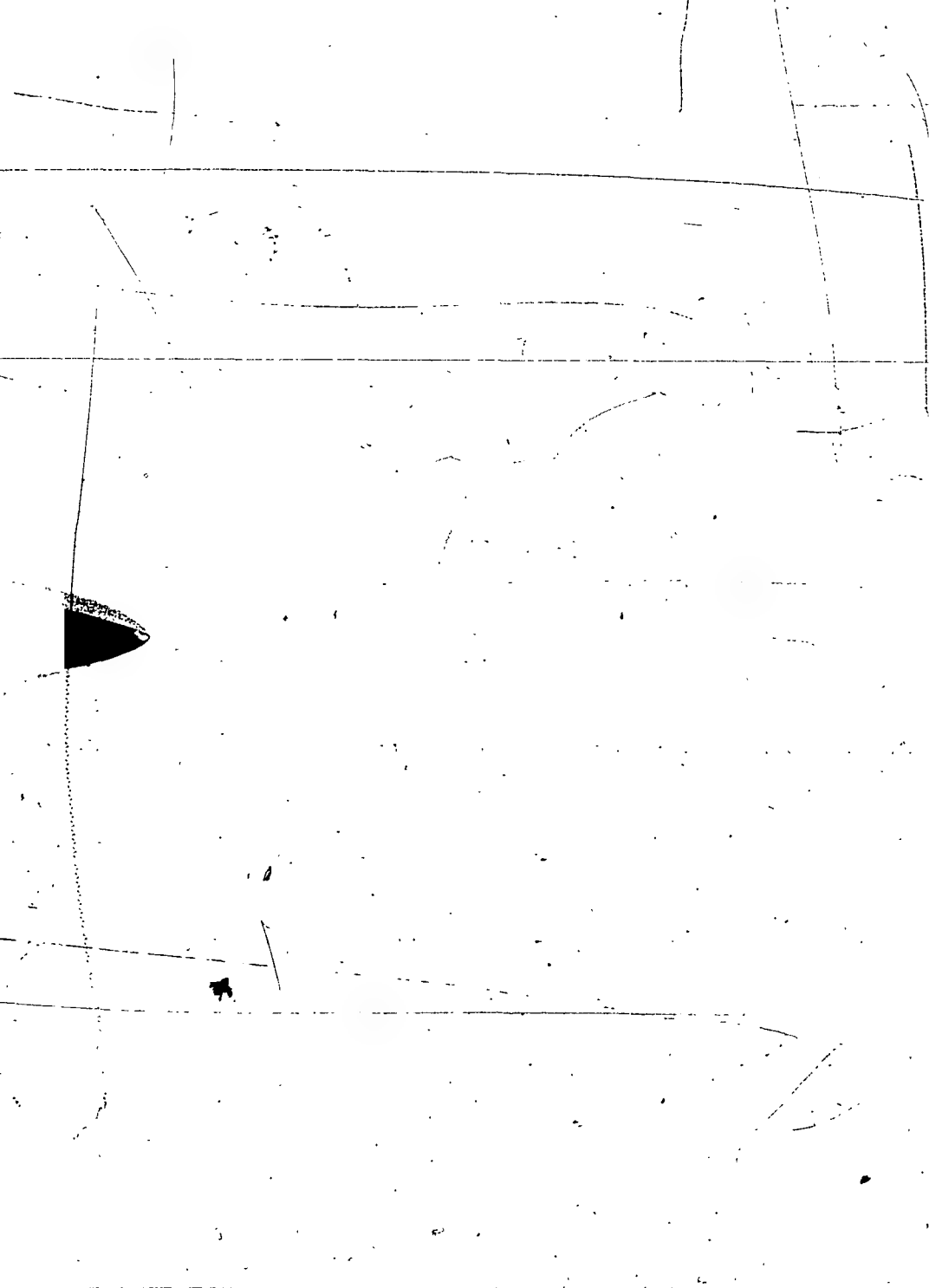
Even as a boy La Vérendrye had been filled with wonder at the tales of the Great Lakes and the Ohio and Mississippi country, which were told by the explorers and hunters who came to his father's house. As he sat and listened by the great hearth fire of blazing logs, he had often dreamed that some day he would go himself to these lands. Perhaps he might even visit the country beyond Lake Superior, where white men had never yet been.

Now, in later life, with sons growing up around him, this old desire once more took possession of him. With it came the ambition, also, to travel right across the unknown land and thus to win a way to that Western Sea which Cartier, Champlain, La Salle, and many another brave Frenchman had sought — and sought in vain. Could he succeed where they had failed? If he could, rich would be his own reward, but above all great would be the honor for France.



SIEUR DE LA VERENDRYE

From the statue in the Parliament Building Winnipeg



Eager to carry out this noble work, La Vérendrye accepted the command of a trading post on Lake Nipigon, to the north of Lake Superior. Here he was just on the border of the great country which he wished to explore. To him one day there came from the Kaministikwia River an old Indian named Ochagach, who told a wonderful story.

"Far towards the setting sun," he said, "lies a great lake. Out of it a river flows to the west through a vast, flat, treeless country where roam great herds of cattle. Down this river I paddled day after day till at last I came to a great salt sea, where dwell men clad in armor and mounted on horses, and where are large towns visited by mighty ships."

The cattle La Vérendrye knew to be the buffalo of the plains. The armorclad people he thought to be the Spaniards, who long before this had built towns on the Pacific coast of America. Taking with him the rough maps of his journey which the old Indian had drawn on birch bark, La Vérendrye now set off for Quebec. There he hoped to receive aid which would enable him at last to discover for France the long sought path to the Western Sea.

The Governor of New France, the gallant Marquis de Beauharnois, listened with keen interest to La Vérendrye's story. He wrote to the king of France, asking that the explorer be given one hundred men and supplies to carry out his great project. But the king, busy with wars in Europe, would do nothing except give La Vérendrye the sole right to build forts and trade in furs in the new lands

that he might discover. From the profits of the fur trade, he must meet the expenses of his search for the Western Sea as best he could.

This was a sorry arrangement for one whose sole thought was to bring advantage and glory to his king and country. But with great courage and patriotism, La Vérendrye at once spent all his own little fortune in fitting out his expedition. What more money he needed he obtained from the selfish merchants of Montreal. Though they were willing to spend nothing on finding the Western Sea, yet they were very eager to share in the rich profits expected from the fur trade. So at last, with their help, La Vérendrye was ready to start.

Picture the scene on the river front of Montreal that hot June day in 1731 when the little band of adventurers said farewell. Their friends had flocked out through the city gates to wish them Godspeed. There stood La Vérendrye in the midst of the throng, his face flushed with pride in the little expedition which he commanded. Now at last he was to have the chance of doing the great things of which he had dreamed in his boyhood. Beside him were three of his sons, Jean, Pierre, and François. To their boundless delight, their father had decided that they were now old enough to go with him. There too was La Jemeraye, his nephew, a brave young officer who knew the Indians and their ways, and already had been as far west as the Mississippi.

Fifty experienced voyageurs, formed the body of the expedition. Hardy men they were, clad in moccasins and

THEIR FRIENDS WISH THEM GODSPEED

fringed buckskins, their long hair bound back by gaily colored handkerchiefs. Strong of arm and quick of eye, they were accustomed with light hearts to face the ever present hardships and perils of stream, forest, and lurking Indian. Now they stood ready beside the little fleet of graceful birch canoes, which were deep laden with guns, powder and balls, bright colored blankets and cotton cloth, flints and steel, axes, tobacco, red war-paint, and beads of every kind and hue. Such things as these the Indians coveted, and for them would give the rich furs which were to reward the merchants who had given money to La Vérendrye for his voyage.

And now the sharp word of command is given. The men quickly take their places and seize their paddles. Last to enter the canoes are La Vérendrye and his lieutenants. *Bon Voyage!* call the people. Handkerchiefs flutter farewell. Cheer answers cheer. Chanting one of their quaint boat-songs the voyageurs bend to their work with a will. At last they are off on their search for the fabled Western Sea. Will they discover it and return crowned with honor and laden with the riches of China and Japan? Or will they, too, like brave men before them, find that the tale of a Sea of the West is but a will-of-the-wisp, luring them on and on and deluding them with hopes ever awakened but never satisfied?

Their way lay up the broad and beautiful Ottawa, which Champlain had traversed more than a century before. They passed the Long Sault, where Daulac and his heroes had made their brave fight against the Iroquois. They

looked upon the lofty river cliffs, in future days to be crowned with the stately Parliament Buildings of Canada. At the Chaudière Falls, like the Indians, they cast in an offering of tobacco to win for the voyage good luck from Windigo, the dread spirit who dwelt in the boiling waters. At night they pitched their tents on the forest-edged river shore, enjoyed an evening meal of venison or wild fowl, smoked, laughed, sang, and rested for the morrow. At daybreak they would be up and away once more, paddling slowly upstream or toiling over rough and slippery portages with heavy packs upon their shoulders.

When they had crossed the height of land between the upper Ottawa and Lake Nipissing, it became easier work. Sometimes they would rest from paddling and let the canoes

RUNNING THE RAPIDS.

drift idly with the current. Again, when the distant roar told them that they were nearing rapids, instead of landing to portage they would shoot madly through the foaming waters, warded off from certain destruction on the rocks

by the keen-eyed bowmen with their steel-shod poles. Then came the pleasant trip among the islands of northern Lake Huron to the old fort of Michillimackinac. There, they were rejoiced to see once more the golden fleur-de-lis of France, floating bravely above its walls.

After a short rest they launched out on the next stage of their journey. This was along the north shore of Lake Superior. Though it was August, the waters were icy cold. Bitter winds whipped across the deep, sullen waters and lashed them into foam-capped waves, that ever threatened to wreck the frail canoes. At night when they landed, the shore was barren and desolate. Sturdy though they were, the men began to murmur at the length and hardships of the journey. But the dauntless spirit of La Vérendrye would brook no flinching, and, after a month of constant peril from buffeting storms, they at last reached the Grand Portage. This was about forty miles southwest of Fort Kaministikwia, where the city of Fort William now stands. It had taken them seventy-eight days of toil to make the journey from Montreal, which we now accomplish with ease in less than two.

The party were now faced by the very difficult series of portages between Lake Superior and Rainy Lake, where La Vérendrye planned to build his first fort. But when the command to advance was given, the murmuring of the men broke out into open mutiny. Some thought with longing of their far-off homes on the banks of the St. Lawrence and demanded to be led back again along the way by which they had come. Others feared that the unknown

regions to the west were infested with evil spirits and, stricken with terror, refused to advance. But there were some who had been with La Jemeraye west to the Mississippi, and these, undismayed, laughed at the fears of their

MAKING A PORTAGE.

fellows. So at last it was arranged that La Jemeraye with half the force was to push on to Rainy Lake, while La Vérendrye with the remainder should winter at Kaministikwia.

So La Jemeraye pressed forward to the west, and before winter set in he had built a fort at the point where Rainy Lake flows into Rainy River. In honor of La Vérendrye this fort was called Fort St. Pierre. It was prettily situated in a meadow among groves of oak trees. In the lake there was an abundance of fish, and the forests were alive with game of all kinds. So a profitable trade with

the Indian at once sprang up, and this enabled La Jemeraye next summer to send rich boatloads of furs to Montreal. Thus the merchants were satisfied, and their further support for the expedition was won.

A Cree Brave.

On June 8th, 1732, exactly one year after their departure from Montreal, La Vérendrye resumed his journey towards the west. It took a month of toilsome travel to reach Fort St. Pierre. There he won the loyalty of the Crees by gifts of powder and shot. So when, after a little rest, in mid-July he set out for the Lake of the Woods, the delighted Indians honored him by an escort of fifty of their gayest canoes.

Early in August this little fleet glided out upon the smooth waters of the Lake of the Woods. Threading his way among hundreds of beautiful islands, La Vérendrye chose a peninsula running far out into the lake as a place suitable both for trade and defence. On it he built a fort, which he named Fort St. Charles in honor of the Governor, Charles, Marquis de

Beauharnois. By this time the flight of the wild fowl overhead, and the shell of ice forming on the lake, gave warning of approaching winter. The Indians began to scatter for the season's trapping. La Vérendrye himself remained at the fort to look after the fur trade.

In the meanwhile, Jean, full of the love of adventure, went on still farther to the north and west. His way lay through a land entirely new to the white man. It was in the very heart of winter, and snow lay waist deep in the woods. But the brave lad and his little band of twenty picked men tramped for one hundred and sixty miles through the forest and along the frozen Winnipeg River. At last, where the river enters Lake Winnipeg, they found a fine site for a fort. Immediately they set to work felling trees, and by spring they had added another to La Vérendrye's string of forts, leading as they hoped towards the Western Sea. In honor of the French king's minister, they called it Fort Maurepas.

Thus by the spring of 1733 La Vérendrye and his sons had carried out a great work. They had won their way through a most difficult country. They had established a chain of forts linking Lake Superior to Lake Winnipeg and the vast western plains. They had added a great, rich land to the realm of France. For this, however, they received little honor or thanks Instead, there began disappointments and misfortunes which were to try them most keenly.

The merchants of Montreal refused to send further supplies. The king would give no money. The explorer's

men, unpaid, short of food, and wearied by their long journeys, were eager to turn back. La Vérendrye alone remained firmly resolved never to abandon the search for the Western Sea. Sick at heart, but determined while health and strength lasted to persevere in his quest, he made the long, weary journey to Montreal. There he met the merchants and by his eloquent tales of the wealth of the West persuaded them at length to furnish the supplies which he so much needed.

Then, hurrying back with all speed to Fort St. Charles, he was met by the news that La Jemeraye, the ablest of his lieutenants, was dead. His patience, his courage, his knowledge of the Indians, and above all his love for the great work, had made him invaluable to his leader. Without complaint he had borne every toil and hardship until worn out at last he had died at Fort Maurepas. And now the expedition must go on without him.

Even heavier, if possible, was the next blow that La Vérendrye was called upon to bear. The Chippewas, who had bought guns from the French, had fired on a party of Sioux Indians, killing some of their number. "Who fire on us?" the startled Sioux had called out, and the Chippewas replied, "The French!" The savage Sioux, who were called "the tigers of the plains," now vowed to have vengeance on the French. Soon, by an evil chance, they came upon a small party under Jean, travelling east across the lake from Fort St. Charles.

It was a misty morning, and though the quick-sighted Indians had discovered the French, the latter were una-

ware of the presence of their dangerous foes. While the little party landed to prepare their breakfast on the shore of an island, the Sioux stole quietly around to the other side. There they beached their canoes and crept noiselessly through the woods. The French had laid aside their arms and were lying about, chatting and smoking, while the kettles boiled. Suddenly, with a terrible war cry, the Sioux broke from the woods and rushed on their prey. Completely surprised, the French were killed to a man. Even Father Aulneau, the gentle Jesuit priest who was with them, was put to death with the rest.

Grief-stricken at this great calamity, La Vérendrye wrote to Maurepas, the king's minister in Paris: "I have lost my son, the reverend Father, and my Frenchmen, misfortunes which I shall lament all my life." But disasters served only to strengthen the explorer's resolve to go on with his work. In the summer Louis, his youngest son, joined him. With three brave sons still left to help him, he continued his search for the Western Sea.

La Vérendrye now knew that the great lake of which Ochagach, the old Indian, had told him was only the Lake of the Woods. The river flowing from it was the Winnipeg, and what he had called the Western Sea was nothing but Lake Winnipeg. Though disappointed, the explorer was encouraged to continue his search by the oft repeated tales told by the Indians of a wonderful tribe called the Mandans. Some said they were white and dressed like himself. All agreed that they had horses and cattle, and tilled the land, and lived in fortified towns. But the thing that caught

La Vérendrye's ear was that they lived far in the western land of the setting sun on the banks of a river that flowed into the ocean. Here must lie the way to the Western Sea, and he determined to visit them.

So in 1738, leaving Pierre in charge of Fort St. Charles, and accompanied by François and Louis, he set out from Fort Maurepas. Crossing Lake Winnipeg, they stemmed the muddy current of the Red River till they came to the mouth of the Assiniboine. There, a little later, the French erected Fort Rouge, little thinking that the rude building on which they labored stood on ground where was to grow up the city of Winnipeg, the gateway to the great North-West.

From this point they ascended the Assiniboine to the spot where now stands Portage la Prairie. There La Vérendrye constructed the strong Fort La Reine, named in honor of the queen of France. Here the Assiniboines soon came to trade. Hitherto they had had only rough implements of stone and bone, so their friendship was quickly won by gifts of awls, chisels, and knives of steel.

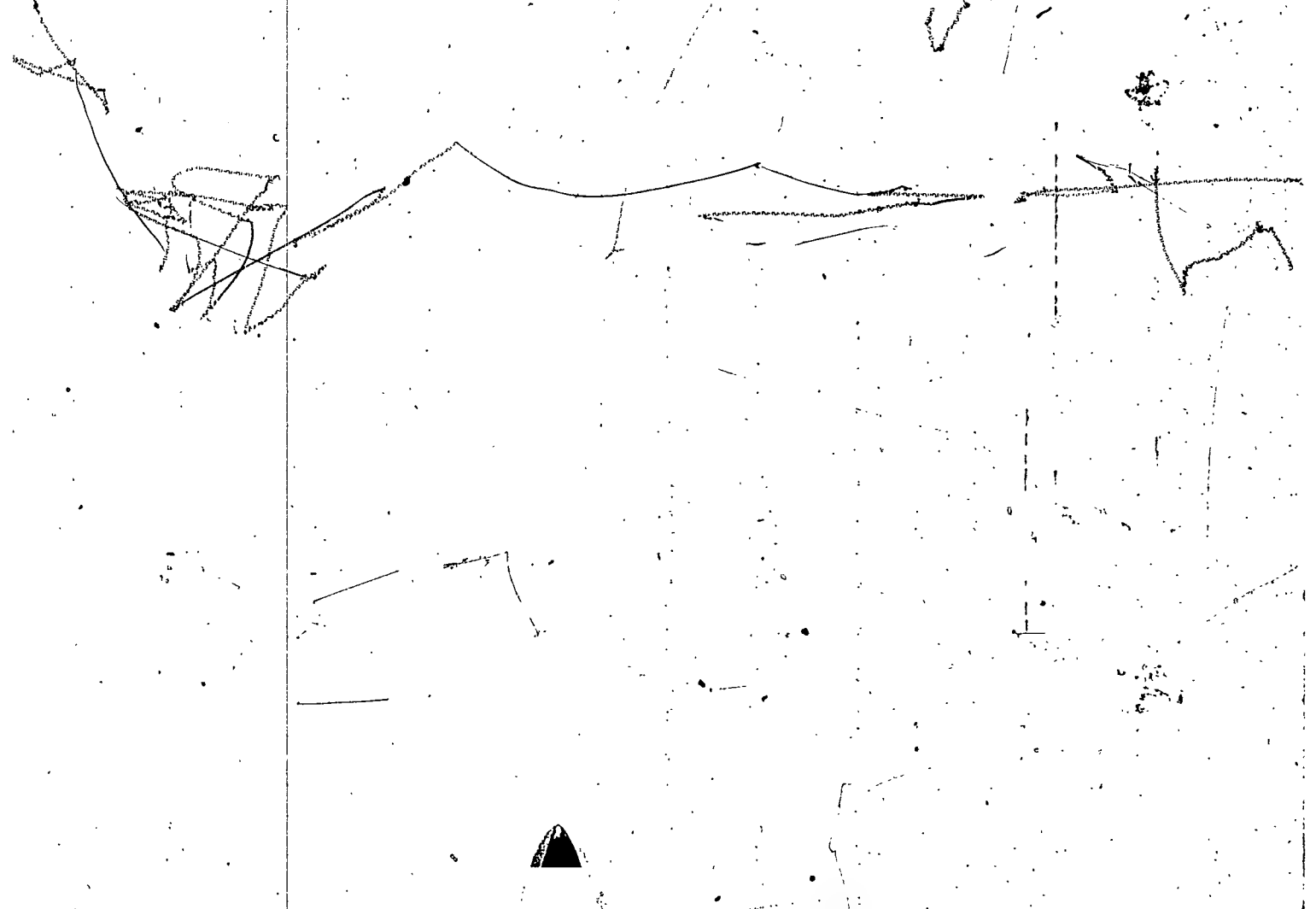
With this little prairie fortress completed, La Vérendrye was ready to push forward once more. On the morning of October 16th, 1738, the garrison of fifty-two soldiers and voyageurs was summoned to arms by the beat of the drum. From them twenty were chosen to go with the explorer on his journey to the land of the Mandans. To each was given powder and shot, an axe, a kettle, and a supply of tobacco. Then, greeting the command to start with a rousing cheer, the party stepped out on the long and perilous march across the unknown waste of western plains.

The nip of autumn frost in the air grew keener as they ascended the Souris River. In the hollows the stunted trees were already bare of leaves. The ice film on the sloughs glittered like silver in the sun. Gophers, coyotes, badgers, and countless herds of buffalo were the chief signs of life, with now and then a roving band of Indians.

Presently they were joined on their march by an entire village of six hundred Assiniboines. The Indians declared their intention of escorting their white friends to the forts of the Mandans. Though in later years horses were abundant on the plains, yet at this time neither the French nor the northern Indians possessed them. So the journey had to be made on foot. La Vérendrye was quite surprised to find that the Indians travelled in as good order as a band of trained soldiers. "They march," he wrote, "in three columns with skirmishers in front and a good rearguard, the old and the lame marching in the centre and forming the central column. If the skirmishers discover herds of buffalo they raise a cry. This is answered by the rearguard, and all the most active men join the vanguard to hem in the buffalo. Of these they secure a number and each takes what flesh he wants. The women and dogs carried all the baggage, the men being burdened only with their arms."

On November 28th, after six weeks of travel, La Vérendrye met the first party of Mandans. Their chief presented him with corn in the ear and a roll of Indian tobacco in token of friendship. Later, native dishes were brought for him and his men. One resembled a pumpkin pie with

MANDAN GIRLS.



no crust, and another was corn pounded to a paste and cooked in the camp-fire embers. After the banquet they smoked the peace pipe and continued their journey.

At last the Mandan village came in sight. The French at once formed themselves in military array. François led them, bearing aloft the flag of France. As they drew near they fired a crashing volley. This salute much impressed both the warriors, who flocked around the white men, and the women and children, who clustered thick on the walls to gain a sight of the strangers.

In many ways La Vérendrye found the Mandans a wonderful tribe. They lived in six scattered villages. Each village was surrounded by a strong wooden wall which only cannon could batter down. At each corner was a stout bastion, and, surrounding the entire fort, was a great ditch fifteen feet deep and eighteen feet wide. Within the walls the cabins were arranged in neat streets and squares, which were kept very clean. The houses were large and comfortable and were divided into several rooms, with bunks around the walls for beds. Below were big cellars, useful for storing furs for trade and keeping dried meat and grain for the winter. They had many sports, La Vérendrye tells us, among them one played with a ball which was probably the game of lacrosse.

But though the Mandans were an interesting folk, La Vérendrye was keenly disappointed. They were not white, as the Indian tales had said. The river on which they lived flowed, not west, but south and east towards the Mississippi. In fact, it was the great Missouri, and they were

the first white men to reach its upper waters. But for this honor they cared little. They sought the Western Sea, and of this, the Mandans knew no more than other Indian tribes.

So in mid-December La Vérendrye determined to return to Fort La Reine. Long before this, the friendly Assiniboines had gone back to their homes. The bitter winter cold of the western plains had now set in. The explorer himself was ill, but he bravely set out at the head of his little force. As there was no fuel for a fire they had to spend the nights half frozen on the open prairie. Day by day, however, they struggled on to the north over the endless wilderness of snow. At last smoke, curling upwards on the horizon, told them that they were nearing the Assiniboine country. Very welcome, indeed, was the shelter of the Indian tepees, and the warm greeting later of comrades at Fort La Reine. "Never in my life," writes La Vérendrye, "did I endure so much misery, pain, and fatigue as on that journey."

Two men had been left behind among the Mandans to learn the language, and La Vérendrye still had some hope that they would bring back tidings of the Western Sea. Eagerly, therefore, he listened on their return to the story of how there had come to the Mandans from the even more distant West a band of strange Indians on horseback. The chief of these Horse Indians had boasted that in his land there were white men who wore beards. They prayed in great buildings to the Master of Life, holding in their hands books with leaves like the "husks of Indian corn." They

AN INDIAN ENCAMPMENT.—From a painting by Paul Kane.

dwelt, he said, on the shores of a great lake whose waters rose and fell and were unfit to drink. Could it be that through the country of these Indians lay the way to the Pacific, and thence to China and Japan? La Vérendrye could not rest until he had tried every possible way to reach this goal. So in 1742, Pierre and François were sent to spy out the land of which the Indians had spoken.

From the Mandan villages they first secured guides. Then for many days they travelled south and west until they encountered a tribe called the Good Looking Indians. These gave them guides till they met the Little Foxes, who in turn led them to the country of the Horse Indians, whom they were seeking.

The Horse Indians they found in great confusion and terror, for they had just been attacked by the warlike Snake Indians. The Snakes had killed many of their bravest warriors and had carried off their women as captives. "We cannot lead the white men to the sea," they said, "because the way lies through the country of the Snakes. But farther to the West are the Bow Indians, who trade with the white men on the coast. They are the only tribe who dare to fight the fierce Snakes. Perhaps they will lead our white brothers westward to the sea."

So Pierre and François, with their two French followers, pressed on to the country of the Bows. They were very heartily welcomed by the great chief of this tribe, whom they found at the head of a large war party of more than two thousand fighting men. "In a few days," he said, "we shall march against the Snakes. If you will come with

us, we will take you to the high mountains that are near the sea. From their summits you will be able to look down upon it."

Joining the great throng of Indian warriors, most of whom rode on horses or mules, the brothers travelled on ever towards the west. At last, on New Year's Day, 1743, there appeared on the horizon in front of them a jagged, white outline. This they soon perceived to be a great range of mountains. Day by day, as they approached nearer and nearer, the giant peaks rose higher above the plain.

Presently, just as they reached the foot of the pine-clad mountain slopes, they came upon a deserted camp of the Snakes. At once a great panic seized the Bow Indians, lest the Snakes might trick them and attack the women and children whom for safety they had left in camp, far to the rear. At once the Bows began a rapid and disorderly flight.

It is hard to imagine what must have been the feelings of the explorers at this moment. As far as eye could see to north and south stretched the mighty mountain barrier, while in front of them it towered aloft into great, glittering, snow-capped peaks. Their party numbered only four. They were not equipped for a mountain journey. Their friends, the Bows, had fled, and before them was the country of the hostile Snake Indians. Brave men though they were, they could do nothing but turn back. Theirs had been the honor, however, first of all white men to behold the glorious sight of the Central Rockies. Pride in the noble land they had won for France must have softened

their disappointment at having failed to reach the Western Sea. Mingled, too, with their pride and their regret, was the resolve that even this obstacle would not stop them

The Mighty Mountain Barrier Turned Back

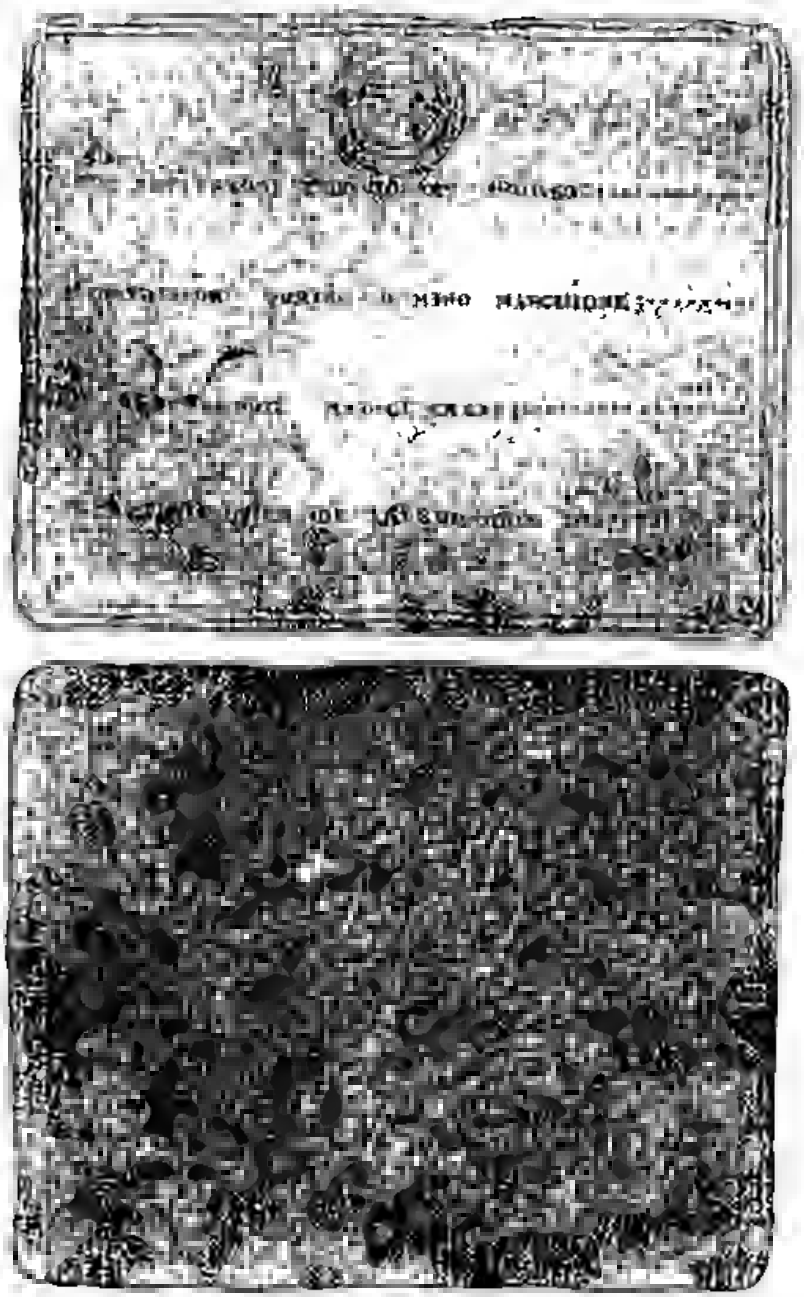
They would return again and, making a passage, would yet reach their goal.

On their way back to Fort La Reine on the summit of a hill overlooking the Missouri they raised a mound of stones. Beneath it they buried a leaden plate bearing the arms of

France. Then, in the name of King Louis, they took formal possession of all the great land they had explored. For one hundred and seventy years this tablet lay undisturbed in its resting place. In March, 1913, it was found by a little girl opposite the city of Pierre in North Dakota. Thus was recovered a precious relic that speaks to us of the deeds of two gallant men.

But another way seemed to be opening up to the Western Sea. In 1739, La Vérendrye had sent François from Fort Maurepas west to Lake Manitoba. There the young adventurer had built Fort Dauphin. Farther north, near the mouth of the Saskatchewan, he erected Fort Bourbon. Then, ascending that river as far as the Forks, he had met a band of Cree Indians. These told him that away to the west were lofty mountains, whence the river flowed. Beyond these again was a great lake, the waters of which were not good to drink. On the Saskatchewan, therefore, François had built Fort Paskoyac, now called the Pas. This fort La Vérendrye purposed to use as the starting point for an advance due westward to the sea.

But now, just when final success seemed within his grasp, came new difficulties. Jealous, lying folk at Montreal had told the Governor and the king that La Vérendrye was making dishonest profits from the fur trade, and he and his sons were recalled from the West. Hurt by the ingratitude of their country and sad at heart to leave the new land which they loved so well, La Vérendrye and his sons journeyed back to Montreal. There, to their joy, they found a friend in the acting Governor, the Marquis



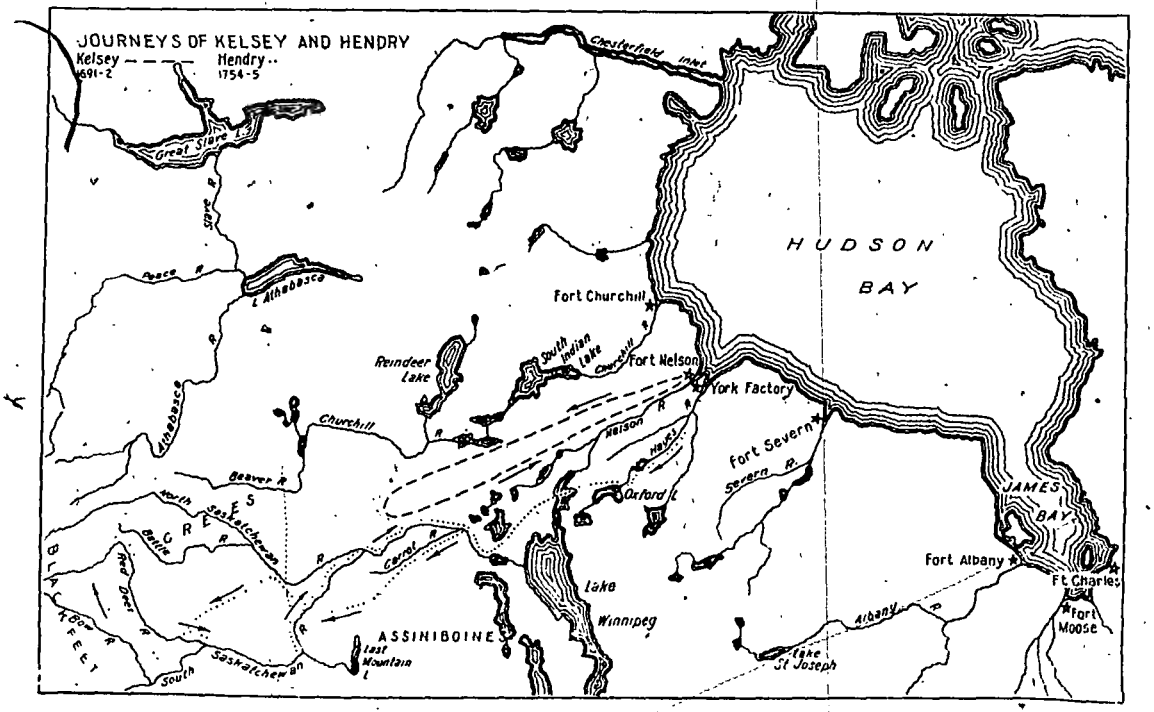
Tablet Deposited by Pierre and François de la Vérendrye 1743 — Obverse and reverse sides. From photographs sent by Charles N. Bell, F.R.G.S., President of the Manitoba Historical and

de Galissonière. This nobleman secured for La Vérendrye the honorable decoration of the Cross of St. Louis. He also restored to him his command in the West and gave him the rank of Captain.

Though he was now in his sixty-fourth year, the great explorer plunged into preparations for a final dash up the Saskatchewan and through the Rockies to the Pacific. It seemed that the work of a lifetime was at last about to be nobly completed. But, alas! in the midst of his labor, Death closed forever to La Vérendrye the path to the Western Sea.

Gladly would his sons have finished his task. But the new Governor gave the command to others, and the sons of La Vérendrye were forbidden to enter the very land which their toil had won for France. Ruined in fortune by the debts they had incurred and neglected by the country they had served so well, they were soon forgotten. But that honor which France denied them we do well to give, for of all the men whose labors and sacrifice have built up our great Dominion none have been more faithful and heroic than La Vérendrye and his sons.

ANTHONY HENDRY


JOURNEYS OF KELSEY AND HENDRY
Kelsey
1691-2
Hendry
1754-5
Great Slave L.
Slave R.
Peace R.
L. Athabasca
Athabasca R.
Beaver R.
Churchill R.
Reindeer Lake
South Indian Lake
Churchill
Fort Churchill
Fort Nelson
York Factory
Nelson R.
Hayes R.
Oxford L.
Fort Severn
Severn R.
HUDSON BAY
JAMES BAY
Fort Albany
Ft Charles
Fort Moose
Albany R.
Lake St Joseph
Lake Winnipeg
Red R.
Assiniboine R.
ASSINIBOINE
Last Mountain L.
South Saskatchewan R.
North Saskatchewan R.
Battle R.
Red Deer R.
Bow R.
BLACKFEET
Carrot R.

CHAPTER V

ANTHONY HENDRY

Off the south coast of England lies a little island, the Isle of Wight. About twenty miles in length and clothed with verdure to the steep cliff edge, it lies like a great green shield athwart the entrance to Southampton Water and guards the approach to the busy harbor of Southampton and to Portsmouth, Britain's greatest naval base. Here and there streams from inland have worn their channels through the cliffs, forming little ravines, or chines as they are called, that slope downward to the sea. These are one of the great beauties of the Island, for often vegetation has followed the path of the streams down to the very sand of the shore, and the little brooks now gurgle and brawl and splash their way seaward beneath a cool shade of trees and vines, while under foot and in the crannies of the rocks grow deep mosses and a multitude of flowers.

Nowadays these beauty spots are the chief delight of the tourist and the nature lover, but in the eighteenth century they often served quite another purpose. The clefts thus made in the steep cliffs formed a ready way of getting up from the shore to the interior, and along the ravines, both on the Isle of Wight and the opposite Hampshire coast, bands of smugglers many a time stealthily and by night

transported inland from their boats on the beach forbidden cargoes of French brandies and wines, laces and silks — much to the loss of his Majesty's customs revenue and greatly to the profit of the smugglers themselves.

But it was a perilous game, as one young lad, Anthony Hendry, found out to his cost. Many of the people of the Island were hand in glove with the smugglers and assisted them, but the government maintained a force of revenue officers to prevent this breaking of the law. These men were ever on the alert. It was a matching of wits between them and the smugglers, in which first one and then the other came off best. Often hard blows and even bullets were exchanged. The smuggler made big profits, but he did so under the imminent risk of prison and the gallows.

It was no doubt the adventurous nature of this calling that appealed to young Hendry. He was a strong and active youth, with good red blood in his veins. To stay quietly at his home on the Isle of Wight was too tame a life for him. He loved the sea beside which he had been brought up. He loved ships and the voyages which he could make so easily across the Channel to the ports of France. Above all, he loved the excitement of evading the king's revenue officers and running the cargoes of smuggled goods safe up the cliffs and inland to secret places, where presently they could be disposed of.

For a time all went well with Hendry in his career of smuggling, and then, one dark night in 1748, the luck changed. A band of revenue officers on the prowl observed the momentary flash of a lantern, apparently a

signal from a vessel close in shore. For a second the gleam of another lantern at the cliff's base answered it. Smugglers were at work. The officers waited until the band would be in the middle of their work, with the goods spread out on the beach. Then they crept cautiously forward.

Suddenly the leader called out, "Hold, in the king's name!" Then bedlam was let loose. Though surprised, the smugglers put up a stout resistance. Blows fell; muskets and pistols flashed. But the revenue men were out in force. Some of the smugglers were knocked down and captured. Others succeeded in pushing out to sea in the ship's boat. A few made off hotfoot along the beach with the revenue officers in full chase. Among those to escape was Hendry, but he had been recognized, and the courts passed sentence of outlawry upon him.

Often one is safest from discovery in a multitude, so Hendry turned his steps towards London. For two years he eluded capture. Then, thinking perhaps to make a fresh start in life in a new and distant world, he applied for a position with the Hudson's Bay Company. The Company of Adventurers, not knowing that he was a fugitive from justice, accepted his services, and thus Anthony Hendry, ex-smuggler and outlaw, in 1750 took ship for York Factory, on the shores of Hudson Bay.

The company made a good bargain when it took on its new employee. For four years Hendry did good and faithful service, and he rose to the responsible position of bookkeeper at Fort York. He was different, however, from the other servants of the Company. They were quite

content to remain in the comparatively comfortable posts on the shores of the Bay, and they were timid and fearful about venturing into the vast, unexplored interior. Hendry, on the other hand, was of a bold and enterprising temper. He chafed continually under the confinement and monotony of life in the fort. He would rather take canoe with the Indians and travel with them by forest and stream and plain to their home on the "great river" of which they so often spoke. At last he volunteered to go inland with the natives, explore their country, and invite them down to Fort York for trade.

The Company gladly accepted Hendry's offer, and well they might do so, for the long struggle with the French for the fur trade had revived in a new and dangerous form. De Troyes, as we have seen, sixty years before had raided the Bay and captured all the Company's forts but Nelson. Then, in 1697, D'Iberville took that fort, too, and the treaty of Ryswick left the English with only Fort Albany in their possession. But the War of the Spanish Succession, owing to the genius of the great Duke of Marlborough, went in favor of Britain, and the treaty of Utrecht, 1713, had placed the Company once more in complete possession of the Bay. For thirty years and more thereafter the Adventurers had no rivals, either on the Bay or in the whole North-West.

Then came a change. La Vérendrye and his sons pierced through from Lake Superior to Lake Winnipeg, and from Lake Winnipeg up the Red, the Assiniboine, and the Saskatchewan. Everywhere they claimed the land for France.

Other French traders followed in their footsteps. French forts began to spring up farther and farther west. The Indians no longer needed to come down to the Bay for trade, for the French were there right in the midst of them. So, fewer and fewer fleets of canoes shot down the Nelson and the Hayes each spring to the Company's fort, and the Company's dividends began to dwindle. Something must be done, and the officers on the Bay clutched eagerly at Hendry's offer to explore inland.

It was midsummer, 1754. Four hundred Assiniboines had come down from the upper country to pitch their tepees for trade at Fort York. Row upon row their birch-bark canoes lay upon the banks of the Hayes. Half-naked children played merrily everywhere. Everywhere skulked, snarled, and fought the hordes of ill-favored curs that haunt an Indian encampment. The squaws, gay with new red flannels, gaudy prints, colored beads, and little tin mirrors, busied themselves with fishing, cutting the firewood, preparing the meals, and other such tasks — for all the drudgery of life was theirs. Their lazy lords smoked contentedly the tobacco gained in trade at the fort. A few of the chiefs strutted about in all the finery of red coats, pantaloons, and bright-colored stockings, the gifts by which the Governor had shown his esteem and friendship. Others were busy gumming with melted resin the splits in the birch-bark canoes, for the party, having traded its furs and being supplied with muskets and powder and shot for another season, was soon to set out on its long journey home again.

Mingling with this motley crew of savages went Anthony

Hendry. He quickly picked up a knowledge of the Assiniboine speech and was tireless in his questions about the upper country and the route that they followed thither. By the promise of great rewards he induced an Indian, called "Little Deer," to be his guide to the unexplored "Great River," the Saskatchewan, on whose banks the French had built forts, and when, on June 26th, 1754, the Indians set out from York Factory, Hendry was given a hearty farewell by his less adventurous comrades.

Patiently paddling, portaging, and tracking the canoes up the Hayes River, the party made fair progress, considering the rapidity of the current. By July 6th they had reached Oxford Lake without incident, except for tremendous storms of rain, thunder, and lightning. Turning west at this point, by a series of little streams and lakes they made their way across to the Upper Nelson. The country was barren, and they suffered much from scarcity of food "We are greatly fatigued," Hendry writes, "with carrying and hauling our canoes and we are not well fed; but the natives are continually smoking, which I find allays hunger." To this trial was added the terrible pest of the mosquitoes which hung around the party in clouds: "They are intolerable," Hendry says, "giving us peace neither night nor day." However, Hendry was tough as the Indians themselves and so was able to sustain all the hardships of the journey.

Travelling south-westward from the Upper Nelson by way of Playgreen and Moose Lakes and an intervening network of streams, on July 22nd Hendry at last had the

satisfaction of gliding out upon the broad waters of the "Great River," of which the Indians had told. It was a historic moment, for he was the first Englishman to behold the Saskatchewan, that mighty river of the Canadian plains. Hendry was now nearly five hundred miles from York Factory, but the river, on whose majestic, sweeping current he gazed, had its sources in the eternal snows of the Rocky Mountains, almost a thousand miles still farther to the west.

Twenty-two miles upstream, about where the Pas now is, they came to a French fort built by the trader De La Corne in the previous year. "On our arrival two gentlemen came to the water side," writes Hendry, "and in a very genteel manner invited me into their house, which I accepted. One of them asked me if I had any letter from my master and where, on what design, I was going inland. I answered that I had no letter and that I was sent to view the country and intended to return in the spring. He told me the Master (De La Corne) and men were gone down to Montreal with the furs, and that they must detain me till their return. However, they were very kind, and at night I went to my tent and told Attickasish, or Little Deer, who smiled and answered, 'They dare not.' I sent them two feet of tobacco, which was very acceptable to them." Tobacco was, in those days, put up in long twisted rolls and measured off by the foot or the yard. The Frenchmen, in their turn, invited Hendry to breakfast and dinner and presented him with the gift of some choice moose flesh. Next morning, without let or hindrance, Hendry went on

his way. Such was the first meeting on the plains of the Great West of those two races which, for a century and a half, had been contending for the mastery of North America, and which at that very moment were girding themselves for the great final act of that epic struggle.

Six miles above the fort Hendry turned south from the Saskatchewan. From this point on he was to traverse a country never before seen by white men. Paddling across Saskeram Lake for twenty miles, they ascended the Carrot River, both banks of which were thickly lined with birch trees. Then, abandoning their canoes, they struck boldly out overland for the open plains. The march was a trying one. Mosquitoes still plagued them. Food was scarce. "Neither bird nor beast is to be seen," writes Hendry, "and we have nothing to eat." At last, after seventy miles, they chanced upon a huge patch of ripe raspberries and wild cherries. Two moose, also, were shot, and multitudes of red deer were encountered. "I am now," Hendry records, "entering a most pleasant and plentiful country of hills and dales with little woods." Accordingly, on August 8th, a halt was made to celebrate their safe return through all dangers from their long journey to the Bay. All joined in the feasting and smoking and dancing, which lasted for a day and a night. From now on they could proceed more leisurely on their way, as game could be had in abundance and they no longer needed to fear the danger of famine.

They met numerous tribes, mostly Assiniboines. With all of them Hendry smoked the peace pipe, and he invited

them down to the shores of the Bay to trade their furs with the English. But in almost every case the reply was the same: "We are conveniently supplied from the Paqua-Mistagushewuck Whiskeheginish," that is, the trading house of the Frenchmen. Hendry soon plainly saw that if the Company was to compete successfully with the French, it, too, must build forts on the plains and bring its goods right to the very door of the Indians.

SARCEE CHIEFS.

"On the 13th of August," Hendry writes, "we are now entered the Muskuty Plains and shall soon see plenty of buffalo and the Archithinue Indians, hunting them on horseback." By the Muskuty Plains he apparently means the open, treeless prairie, and the Archithinue Indians are no other than the famous Blackfoot Confederacy of Bloods, Blackfeet, Piegans, and Sarcees. These were the most fierce and warlike of all the tribes of the Far West. The traders of Hudson Bay had never heard of these strange "Horse Indians," and Hendry was determined not to turn back until he had met their great chief and had invited him to send his men down to the Bay for trade.

Two days later they sighted several herds of buffalo grazing peacefully on the plains, but, after closely examining the ground, Hendry's Indians told him that the main herd had moved off to the north-west and that the Blackfeet, whom they were seeking, had followed them. He at once commanded his party to travel in the same direction.

This brought them, in five days, to a large river with high banks, crowned with birch, poplar, and fir trees. Undoubtedly this was the South Saskatchewan River. Hendry was at a loss to know how the party could cross it, but the Indians soon found a way. Felling some willows, they made rough canoe frames from the branches and covered them deftly with moose skins. In half a day the task was done, and the party was carried safely across to the other bank. Three days later they came to another broad stream flowing rapidly eastward between high, forest-clothed banks. This was the North Saskatchewan. They were in between the two branches of the great river to the west of the Forks and were entering the finest hunting ground in all the West, a hunter's paradise, where buffalo, moose, deer, wild fowl, fish, and beaver abounded.

In mid-September Hendry writes, "I cannot describe the fineness of the weather and the pleasant country I am now in." They were by that time in the midst of the buffalo herds, and the Indians made great slaughter with bow and arrow among the noble beasts. But the casualties were not all on one side. "Sunday," Hendry says, "I dressed a lame man's leg, and he gave me for my trouble a moose nose, which is considered a great delicacy among the In-

dians." A little later, he tells us: "I went with the young men a-buffalo hunting, all armed with bows and arrows; killed several; fine sport. We beat them about, lodging twenty arrows in one beast. I killed a bull buffalo; he was nothing but skin and bone. I took out his tongue and left his remains to the wolves, which were waiting around in great numbers. My feet are swelled with marching, but otherwise I am in perfect health. So expert are the natives buffalo hunting they will take an arrow out of the buffalo when the beasts are foaming and raging with pain and tearing the ground up with their feet and horns until they fall down. The buffalo are so numerous, like herds of English cattle, that we are obliged to make them sheer out of our way."

Other and less welcome game than buffalo was also to be found. Grizzly bears, such as Kelsey had encountered farther east and north, were found here too. On September 17th, Hendry tells us: "Two young men were miserably wounded by a grizzly bear that they were hunting to-day. One may recover but the other never can." The next day this Indian died. Later another Indian, when hunting for beaver, wounded a grizzly bear. With a ferocious growl the huge beast rushed at him, but he flung his beaver coat in its face, which the bear in its rage stopped to rend into pieces. Thus the Indian escaped by a trick they commonly used when forced to flee from a bear.

They now began to overtake the Blackfeet, and on October 1st they at last encountered a party. These redoubtable warriors rode up very gallantly and fearlessly,

armed with bows and arrows, darts, and bone lances or spears. Hendry smoked the peace pipe with them and presented their leader with gifts. The latter promised in turn to announce the coming of the White Men to the Great Chief of his Nation.

It was not until October 14th, however, after they had travelled south-west across the Red Deer River, that they

An Indian Camp at the Foot-hills of the Rockies.

overtook the main Blackfoot encampment. It consisted of two hundred tepees, pitched in two rows, so as to form a street, about the middle of which was an opening where the great tent of the chief was placed. Up this street marched the bold English explorer, preceded by four of the principal Indians of his party, and with the rest bringing

up the rear. As he passed, he was followed by the craning necks and peering eyes of multitudes of warriors, squaws, and children, whose first glimpse this was of one of the strange race of white men, of whom they had often heard tell.

The tent of the Great Chief, Hendry tells us, "was large enough to contain fifty persons. He received us, seated on a buffalo skin, attended by twenty elderly men. He made signs to me to sit down on his right hand, which I did. Our leaders (the Assiniboines) set several great pipes going the rounds and we smoked according to their custom. Not one word was spoken. Smoking over, boiled buffalo flesh was served in baskets of bent wood. I was presented with ten buffalo tongues."

These friendly ceremonies over, Hendry now came to business. "Great Chief of the Blackfeet," he said, "I am sent by the White Chiefs who live afar off by the Great Eastern Waters to invite you to send your young men down to their forts with the fur of the fox and the beaver. For these they will receive in return beads and cloth and powder and shot and guns and all things else that their hearts may desire. And by the White Chiefs they will be received with kindness and friendship."

The wily old Chief did not answer at once but when Hendry came the next morning he said: "White Man, I have heard thy message, but the fort is far off. Our young men ride the plains like the wind, but they know not the skill of the paddle. They live not on fish, but on the flesh of the buffalo. They follow the herds as they wander

from place to place, and winter and summer they lack not for food day by day. The bow and the arrow, the spear and the dart suffice them. They are lords of the plentiful plains, while we hear that those who go down to the fort ofttimes starve on the way. Therefore we cannot go to the fort, though we thank thee for coming this long way to invite us. White Man, go in peace, and carry the word of the Blackfeet in friendship to the Great White Chiefs who dwell by the far Salt Water." He then presented Hendry and the Assiniboine leaders with gifts, and they took their departure. "His remarks," Hendry frankly records, "I thought exceedingly true."

An Indian of the Plains.

The explorer noted many interesting things about these strange Indians. Their horses they turned out to grass, tethered by long thongs of buffalo hide to stakes driven fast in the ground. Their pads and stirrups were also of buffalo skin, while their halters were plaited of hair. Their horses were clean-cut and spirited and about fourteen hands high. The Blackfeet were splendid horsemen and de-

lighted to show their skill in racing each other and in hunting the buffalo. The chiefs maintained strict discipline over their warriors, and a careful watch by scouting outposts was kept around the encampment.

Hendry's mission was now really finished, but he could not easily return to York Factory until the Indians went down in the spring. After leaving the Blackfeet, he travelled south-west sixty miles and then circled northward. In a fairly well-wooded country, watered by many streams, in which the beaver were plentiful, he made preparations for passing the winter. As closely as we can tell he was now somewhere near the upper Red Deer River, about midway between the spots where now stand the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. From Fort York he had travelled in his roundabout course probably nearly one thousand three hundred miles, while, as the crow flies, he was distant about nine hundred and fifty miles from his friends on the shores of Hudson Bay.

A Blackfoot Brave.

It was now November, and the squaws of the party were busy dressing skins for moccasins and winter clothing. Hendry tells how the women sat at the doors of the tepees "knitting moose leather into snowshoes" for winter travel

in the woods. But the warriors spent their time feasting and dancing and thumping their tom-toms, with no thought for the morrow, though many of them were not yet half provided with skins for warmth in the winter. "What surprises me most," Hendry writes, "they never go out of their tents but when they want provisions, although the beaver and otters are swarming about us in the creeks and swamps."

The autumn was mild and beautiful. On December 1st Hendry was still wearing his summer clothing, and in his journal he says: "No frost here more than in the middle of summer." Then winter swooped down with true Western suddenness. The very next day came a blinding snow-storm and a frost that hardened the ground and sealed up the sloughs with ice. The lazy Indian braves now busied themselves with hunting and trapping to secure the skins for their winter clothes. But Hendry was surprised to note that when they had killed all they wanted for food and for clothing, they would exert themselves no further and relapsed again into idleness.

"Why do you not trap the fox and the beaver?" asked the impatient trader.

"The Blackfeet would kill us if we trapped in their country," they replied, with a cunning smile.

Hendry was not satisfied. "Where, then, will you get the skins to carry down to the fort in the spring?" he demanded.

At first they laughed and remained silent, but when he pressed them for an answer, they impatiently said: "We

can get from the Blackfeet far more furs in the spring than our canoes can carry. Why, then, should we labor?"

Hendry now understood. The Assiniboines bought furs from the Blackfeet with the goods they got from the white men, and in turn sold the furs to the Company at a good profit. Thus in the winter they could afford to live idly at ease, though in spring and summer they had to face the arduous trip to the trading posts.

The winter passed pleasantly. The encampment was moved leisurely about from place to place. There was an abundance of game, and Hendry hunted and trapped to his heart's content. A party of Indians who had raided the Blackfeet joined them with many fresh scalps and a number of prisoners. They offered Hendry the gift of a boy and a girl as his slaves, but he declined them with thanks.

Early in March they began to move eastward. For some distance they went down the Red Deer on sleds. Then the ice grew unsafe, and they began preparations for the long trip to the Bay. The young men went in search of birch bark for canoes, the older men fashioned the vessels, and the women prepared bags of dried meat or pemmican, as it was called, for the journey. All were in cheerful spirits at the coming of spring. Feasting and dancing and thumping of native drums were incessant. On April 23rd Hendry took part in the celebration by hanging out his flag in honor of St. George. He explained the meaning of his act to the curious savages. They were vastly impressed by the story of St. George and the Dragon and enthusiastically joined in with him to do honor to such a

great warrior. Thus was held the first strange, quaint commemoration of the patron saint of England on the plains of the Great West.

That very evening the ice broke up in the river, and on the 28th they embarked in their canoes for distant Fort York. It was easy going downstream on the Red Deer and the Saskatchewan. The current was swift, and the melting snows made the channel deep and free, so they easily made thirty or forty miles a day. Frequently they encountered other bands of Assiniboines, all well supplied with furs which they had acquired, for the most part, by trade with the Blackfeet. Of over sixty canoes that now made up their flotilla, Hendry says, there was "not a pot nor a kettle among us." They had all been exchanged with the Blackfeet for the pelts that filled the canoes.

A little below the Forks of the Saskatchewan they came to the first French fort. Hendry was hospitably received by the French commander, but there was guile in his kindness. While he was dining with the leader the French soldiers poured out ten gallons of brandy for Hendry's Indians, and then when they were in the genial humor thus produced proceeded to trade with them. "It is surprising," Hendry wrote ruefully, "to observe what an influence the French have over the natives. I am certain they have got above one thousand of the richest skins." Three days elapsed before Hendry could coax the Indians away from their over-friendly French hosts.

Six days later they came to the fort at the Pas, where Hendry had called on his way up the river. De La Corne,

the commandant, had now returned from the East, and he and his little garrison of nine men received the Englishman cordially. But it was only to play on him the same trick as before. "The Indians are all drunk," Hendry laments, "but the master was very kind to me. He is dressed very genteel, but his men wear only drawers and striped cotton shirts, ruffled at the hand and breast. This house has been long a place of trade and is named Basquia. It is twenty-six feet long, twelve wide, nine high, having a sloping roof, the walls log on log, the top covered with willows, and divided into three rooms, one for trade, one for storing furs, and one for dwelling." De La Corne showed Hendry his storeroom filled with furs, and he records: "The French speak several Indian languages to perfection; they have the advantage of us in every shape, and if they had Brazile tobacco, which they have not, would entirely cut off our trade."

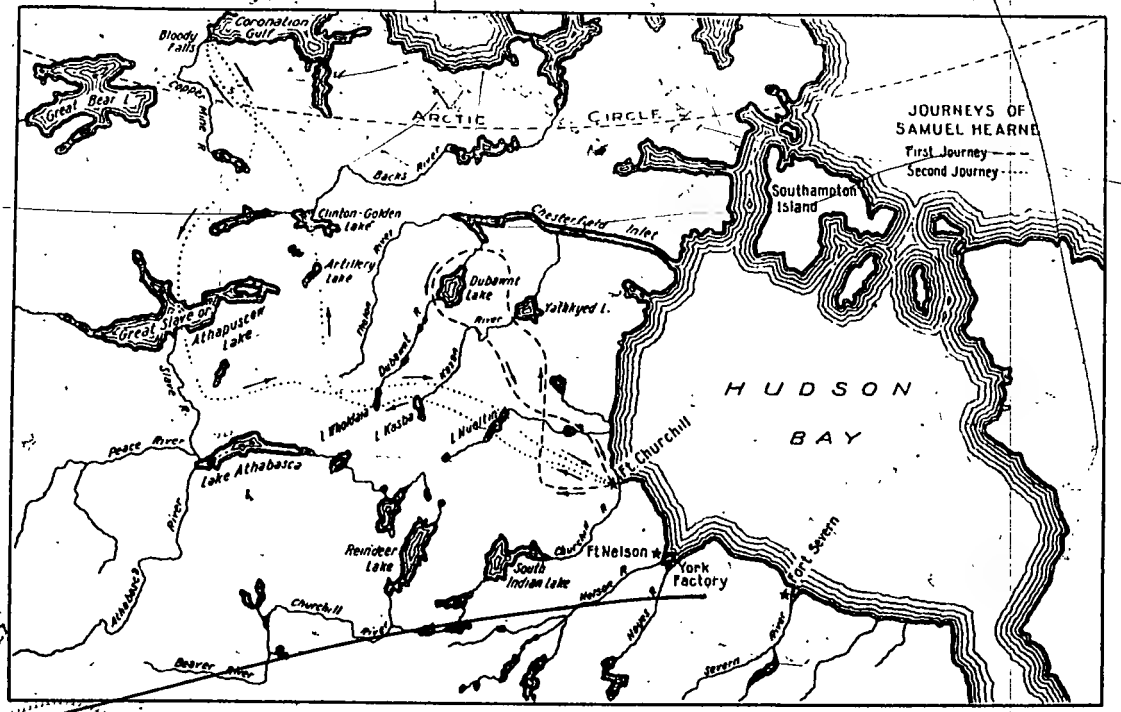
This time it took the Indians four days to sober up from the French brandy. Then they went on down the Nelson and Hayes to Fort York. There were now only the heavy furs left, which the French traders did not want, but even these formed a cargo of great value, and so Hendry received a royal welcome at the Factory, when on June 20th, 1755, his fleet of canoes swept into view on the river.

But his popularity did not last. When he came to the part of his story that dealt with the Blackfeet, the traders laughed. "Indians on horseback!" they exclaimed, "Impossible! Whoever heard of such a thing? Where could they get the horses?" We know that they got them

from the Spaniards far to the south in Mexico, but the Governors on Hudson Bay preferred to believe simply that Hendry was lying. Then, too, perhaps, they feared that, if the Adventurers took for truth Hendry's tales of the great wealth inland and acted on his urgent advice, forts would be built in the interior, and they would be sent to meet the dangers and hardships that he had braved, a possibility from which they shrank timidly back. So, when the factors wrote home, for jealous and cowardly reasons they discredited Hendry's exploits and urged against his plans for planting trading posts inland. And they were successful. The great Company gave him only the paltry gratuity of £20 for his toil and his courage, and all permission to go again inland was firmly refused.

Anthony Hendry was not the man to bear without protest such ingratitude and stupidity. He resigned from the Company's service and returned to England, where we lose sight of him. But the scoffing of that age has given place to the admiration of this. Those who laughed at him then have themselves become a laughing-stock for all time, while Anthony Hendry has taken his rightful place as the sturdy and fearless pioneer explorer of the vast inland empire of the Upper Saskatchewan Valley.

SAMUEL HEARNE


Coronation Gulf
Bloody Falls
Great Bear L.
Copper
River
ARCTIC CIRCLE
Back's River
JOURNEYS OF
SAMUEL HEARNE
First Journey
Second Journey
Southampton Island
Clinton-Golden Lake
Chesterfield Inlet
Artillery Lake
Dubawnt Lake
Dubawnt River
Yathkyed L.
Great Slave or Athapuscow Lake
Slave River
Peace River
L. Thoa-lan
L. Kasba
L. Nueltin
HUDSON
BAY
Ft. Churchill
Lake Athabasca
Athabasca River
Reindeer Lake
South Indian Lake
Churchill River
Ft. Nelson
York Factory
Hayes River
Fort Severn
Severn River
Churchill River
Beaver River

CHAPTER VI

SAMUEL HEARNE

I. *Hearne's First Journey*

Boom! Boom! Boom! Seven times the great guns of Prince of Wales Fort spoke out in thunderous salute. As the smoke-clouds floated slowly upward, a little party emerged from the massive gateway of the fortress and set out north and west over the white waste of new-fallen snow. Cheer after cheer followed them from their friends, clustered thick on the ramparts, and anxious eyes watched until they became mere black specks in the distance and finally were lost in the immensity of the wilderness.

Samuel Hearne.

To-day you may still see the ruins of Fort Prince of Wales. In 1782 the French Admiral La Pérouse captured it. Before he left he tried to blow it up, but failed. In places his mines shattered the upper walls, but, for the most part, the huge, squared blocks of granite still stand solidly in place, though the mortar is crumbling between. The charred ends of rafters that once echoed to the wild

song and merry laughter of the fur traders still cling to the walls of bastion and dwelling house, and the cannon that once pealed forth a welcome to the incoming Company's ships lie dismantled, spiked, and silent. Thus La Pérouse left the fort, and thus it stands to-day — a dismal ruin on a desolate coast.

But it was not so on that sixth of November, 1769, when Samuel Hearne was sent forth with pomp of cannon to

Fort Prince of Wales (Churchill). — From Hearne's Account, 1799 Edition.

wander on the Barren Lands in search of a fabled mountain of copper. Commenced in 1743, when war with France once again endangered the possessions of the English Company on Hudson Bay, Fort Prince of Wales was designed to be a veritable northern Gibraltar. It was in the shape of a square, the sides of which were three hundred and sixteen feet long. The walls were of hammer-

dressed stone, thirty feet thick at the base and twenty feet high. At each corner stood a stout bastion, so that attackers could be taken by flank fire, while over the walls frowned forty-two guns which the Adventurers commanded the Governor to "keep constantly loaded with powder and ball ready for service during the time the rivers are open."

A Chief of the Chipewyans with Wampum Necklace.

Over this stronghold, in strength second only to Quebec in all North America, ruled the Governor, Moses Norton, lording it like a king over the Company's men and over the Indians who came to the fort for trade. These were mostly Chipewyans who hailed from the distant North-West. In the summer they wandered out on the Barren Lands — the tundra or Arctic prairies — living on the innumerable herds of musk-ox and caribou that found pasture there. The winter they spent in the wooded country to the south-west around Great Slave Lake, which they called Athapuscow, which means "the lake with the beds of reeds."

Many a cargo of the richest pelts had these Chipewyans brought down the Seal River to Churchill, for the farther north the thicker and finer the fur coat of the animals. But even in the early days the traders had noted that these Northern Indians, as they called them, also brought down with them curious copper weapons and tools. This metal they seemed able to secure in abundance. Whence could it come? The Indians, when questioned, pointed vaguely to the north-west and answered, "There where the sun sets in summer, many days' journey across the great northern plain, lies the Neetha-san-san-dazey — the Far-Off-Metal River. Near it is a whole mountain of copper. If the white men build a fort there and send their great winged canoes through the icy sea to the mouth of the river, they can fill them full with both the furs and the metal which they covet."

But who would attempt the difficult and dangerous task of crossing the Barren Lands to find this Coppermine River? He must needs be both a bold and a resolute man who would face such an undertaking. The Governor's choice fell on Samuel Hearne. Hearne was as yet only a youth of twenty-four years, but his life had been crammed full of rugged experience. At eleven he had gone to sea, and the sea was no tender school for boys of that age. Almost immediately he had taken part in a stubborn sea fight. During the Seven Years' War he had served as a midshipman in the Royal Navy. Then, when quiet peace times returned, still in search of adventure, he took service in a Hudson's Bay Company's ship. For two or three

years he traded with the Indians and Eskimos along the west coast of the Bay and thus acquired some valuable knowledge of the natives. Moreover, as a seaman, he was trained to take the ship's reckonings, and thus could be trusted to determine by accurate observations the position of any lakes, rivers, or mines which he might discover.

Special orders had been issued by the Governing Committee in London to send out the expedition, and so when the party set forth on November 6th, 1769, Hearne was amply equipped with everything he had deemed necessary for the success of his journey. Powder and shot for hunting, tents and blankets for shelter, tobacco, hatchets, beads, and other trinkets as presents for the Indians, were piled high on the sledges. Supplies enough for a trip of two years were taken along. Two other white men, one a seaman and the other a landsman, went with the young officer, while Chief Chawchinahaw and a small band of Northern Indians acted as guides.

In the highest of spirits at the magnificent farewell given him at the fort, Hearne, under the guidance of his Indians, struck off north-west, crossed the Seal River, and entered the Barren Grounds. Here hardships began. The sledges on which they hauled their supplies were knocked to pieces on the bowlder-strewn ground, and wood with which to repair them was scarce. Indeed, they were lucky if in that "land of little sticks," as the Indians called it, they found a few stunted bushes from which they could chop a little brush to boil their kettles with. Everywhere stretched the level, monotonous plain, dead

and shrouded in an endless mantle of snow. Over it swept unhindered the winds from the north that made the bitter winter cold pierce to the bone. Owing to the lack of wood for tentpoles and camp fires, Hearne says in the record he kept of his journey, "It was scarcely ever in our power to make any other defence against the weather than by digging a hole in the snow down to the moss, wrapping ourselves up in our clothing, and lying down in it with our sledges set up edgeways to windward."

But hardships Hearne had both the strength and the courage to endure. It was the treachery of his Indian guides that proved his undoing. Early in the journey, he became aware that Chawchinahaw was playing a double game. He did not really have the success of the undertaking at heart. He tried to discourage the explorer by telling him the most alarming tales of the difficulties that lay in his path. When that did not deter Hearne in the slightest, he had recourse to the weapon of hunger. They had now entered a more wooded country to the west where food was more plentiful, but the Northern Indians, leading the way, deliberately killed only sufficient game for themselves, while Hearne and his men, coming after, could find scarcely enough to support them. "A few partridges were all we could get to live on," said Hearne, "and these were so scarce that we seldom could kill as many as would amount to half a bird a day for each man, which, considering that we had nothing else for the twenty-four hours was in reality next to nothing."

Then the Northern Indians began to desert, always

carrying off with them some of Hearne's powder and shot, and whatever else took their fancy. When he taxed Chawchinahaw openly with his treachery, the chief brazenly announced his intention of going off too. Accordingly, Hearne tells us: "He and his crew set off towards the south-west, making the woods ring with their laughter, and left us to consider our unhappy situation, near two hundred miles from Prince of Wales Fort, all heavily laden and our strength and spirits greatly reduced by hunger and fatigue."

There was nothing to do but turn back. Full of disappointment, Hearne dejectedly faced about for the fort. For mile after mile of the weary march they kept on, tugging stubbornly at the heavily laden sledges. They were now favored by a spell of fine weather, and, partridge proving plentiful, the danger of hunger came to an end. "On December 11th," Hearne writes, "we arrived safe at Prince of Wales Fort, to my own great mortification and to the no small surprise of the Governor, who had placed great confidence in the abilities and conduct of Chawchinahaw."

II. *Hearne's Second Journey*

But Hearne was not the man to fold his hands in defeat. Preparations for a second attempt were at once begun, and by February 23rd, 1770, he was ready to start again. This time he went without any white companions and took only three Chipewyans and two Southern Indians or Crees. No cannon now roared out a salute in honor

of his departure, for they were buried deep in the mid-winter snows that crowned the battlements; but three hearty British cheers from the garrison gave Godspeed to the adventurer.

Instead of crossing the Seal River, Hearne this time ascended it to the west until he came to Lake Shee-than-nee, or High Hill Lake. Here, where there was an abundance of fish, they resolved to camp until the wild geese came north in the spring. They pitched their moose-leather Indian tent, with the door to the south, far out on a point that commanded a beautiful view of the wooded shores of the lake. Then, with the snow and moss cleared away down to the rock and the floor strewn with odorous pine branches, they made themselves snug round their camp fire, and cutting holes in the ice of the lake so that they could spread a net by passing it with a pole from hole to hole, they secured plenty of fine pike and trout to support them.

But suddenly, on April 1st, greatly to their surprise, the nets yielded no fish. Angling through the ice proved equally unsuccessful. A trying time followed. Once for three days they had "no refreshments except a pipe of tobacco and a draft of water." Then they had luck and shot two deer. Whenever they thus obtained food the Indians gorged themselves, feasting with no thought of the future. "Indeed," Hearne says, "it was either all feasting or all famine. Once for near seven days we tasted not a mouthful of anything except a few cranberries, water, scraps of old leather, and burnt bones. I

have frequently seen the Indians examine their wardrobe, which consisted chiefly of skin clothing, and consider what part could be best spared; sometimes a piece of an old, half-rotten deer skin and at others a pair of old shoes were sacrificed to alleviate extreme hunger."

At the end of April they moved north towards the Barren Lands, and by the middle of May geese, swans, ducks, gulls, and other birds of passage were flocking northward in infinite numbers, filling the air with their cries. There was now an abundance of food, but often no fuel with which to cook it, wood being lacking and the moss being too wet to burn. Thus they were frequently reduced to eating in its raw state fish, fowl, venison, and even the evil-smelling flesh of the musk-ox.

They had neglected to bring poles for their tents from the wooded country and now were compelled to spend day and night in the open under the most trying conditions of alternate rain and snow, and thawing and freezing. "But notwithstanding these hardships," writes the indomitable Hearne, "we continued in perfect health and good spirits."

Early in June, with the melting of the snow, they threw away both their snowshoes and sledges and took all their goods on their backs. This was hard work. Hearne describes his own burden. It consisted of the quadrant and its stand, a trunk containing books, papers, and a compass, a large bag filled with his wearing apparel, a hatchet, knives, files, and other such things intended for presents for the natives. His awkward load weighed

more than sixty pounds, but he staggered sturdily on with it day after day, often for twenty miles over the rough ground of the plains.

On June 20th they reached the Kazan River, flowing north into Yath-kyed or White Snow Lake. Here they found a band of Northern Indians in canoes, busily spearing the caribou as they swam across the river, the animals being easily overtaken while in the water. The Indians ferried Hearne's party across the river and informed him that there were other rivers ahead that could not be forded. "This induced me," he says, "to purchase a canoe at the easy rate of a single knife, the full value of which did not exceed one penny."

They were now travelling north-west towards Lake Dubawnt and were in the heart of the Barren Lands. Barren indeed they were of trees, but not barren of beauty or of life. Everywhere plant life was struggling for victory over the rugged rocks. The surfaces of granite boulders and the more exposed tops of the low rises and hills were stained by lichens black and gray, lilac and olive green, brown and scarlet and white, till they flamed and glittered in the sun. Everywhere in the less exposed places were the mosses, a deep, rich, living carpet of a thousand tints and hues and wayward patterns. The powdered rocks, washed down by rain into the ponds and lakes, had formed mud flats where a lush growth of grass made fair green meadows. Everywhere, too, was a fairy growth of flowers. Tiny cranberry and crowberry and cloudberry shrubs were there, struggling to bear aloft a burden of fruit heavier

often than the plants themselves. Scarlet arctous, white ledums, purple vaccinium, and mairanias were scattered and massed far as the eye could see. Nor was the higher animal life absent from the scene. The echoing calls of gulls and loons fell upon Hearne's ear. On the slopes ground squirrels sunned themselves, and through the land white wolf and wolverine prowled seeking their prey. Huge herds of clumsy musk-ox lumbered across the plain, and the restless caribou or reindeer pastured as in a vast park, travelling always in the face of the wind and changing their course with the shifting breeze. Sometimes they were in groups of scores or hundreds; sometimes in mighty herds that presented a forest of tossing antlers that reached to the far horizon. And Hearne, of all white men, was the first to gaze on this magnificent panorama of the Barren Lands — barren of man and of his handiwork, but full of nature's beauty and of nature's life.

On through this wild scene, strange to his eyes after the cultivated landscape of England, wandered Hearne with his Indians, carrying their packs and their little canoe. At the end of August they reached and crossed the Dubawnt River north of the Lake. As the rivers all ran northward and the Indians wished to travel from east to west in a land that supplied no wood for rafts or canoes, they had always to carry these vessels with them. "They are sometimes obliged," Hearne says, "to carry them one hundred and fifty or two hundred miles without having occasion to make use of them, yet at times they cannot do without them."

The explorer now became aware that his Northern Indians were no longer making steadily for the north-west, but were simply drifting about from place to place after the caribou herds with the rest of the Indians. When questioned they sullenly answered: "The summer is far spent. We cannot this year reach the Coppermine. It is best to pass the winter in the great woods to the south-west. Then next year we can march north to the mountain of copper."

Of necessity Hearne had to consent. As they travelled slowly south-west other bands of Indians joined them, until a village of seventy tepees and upwards of six hundred people was formed. "Our encampment," Hearne narrates, "had the appearance of a small town, and in the morning, when we began to move, the whole ground seemed to be alive with men, women, children, and dogs. Yet the deer were so numerous that the Indians not only killed as many as were sufficient for our large number, but often several only for the skins, marrow, and tongues, and left the carcasses to rot or to be devoured by the wolves, foxes, and other beasts of prey."

Then, on August 12th, a great calamity befell the explorer. He was making an observation of the sun to determine his latitude. Leaving the quadrant standing, he sat down to eat dinner, when a sudden gust of wind toppled the precious instrument over. The ground was stony, and the quadrant was shattered into fragments. Hearne stood in deep dismay. He could now no longer trace his journey with accuracy nor surely locate the

Coppermine, even if he should reach it. He must go back to the fort.

It was a bitter disappointment to swallow. Reluctantly Hearne turned once again towards Fort Prince of Wales, but all the stubborn pluck of his race was aroused. He would try again and again. Even if it cost him his life he would reach the Far-Off-Metal River for which he had twice set out.

The very next day Hearne was plundered of most of his goods by a party of Northern Indians. The white man, having no longer the wherewithal to reward his followers, they now became insolent and did but very poor service. Travelling down the west side of Dubawnt Lake, they then turned south-east towards the Churchill River. In September cold weather set in. The Northern Indians had been joined by their wives, who prepared warm winter suits of skins for them, but they selfishly refused to allow the squaws to perform this service for Hearne and his Crees, who consequently suffered miserably from the cold.

"In this forlorn state we continued our course to the south-east," Hearne tells us. Then suddenly their fortunes changed. On the evening of September 20th, there loomed through the dusk a party of strange Indians, quickly advancing. At their head stalked a giant, Matonabbee. Six feet tall and straight as an arrow, he was a prince among Red Men, and he was the friend of the white fur traders. He was the son of a Northern Indian and a Southern slave woman, but when his father died the

Governor had adopted him as his son, and thus for several years he had lived at the fort with the English, whose language he partly knew. He had travelled far to the south with the Crees, far to the west into the land of the Athabaska Indians, and far to the north into the Barren Lands with his own folk. He had acted as the Company's messenger and ambassador to these peoples. All their languages he spoke with ease, and among all the tribes he was a man of power.

Matonabbee quickly learned the forlorn adventurer's story. He at once clothed him in a warm suit of otter skins and prepared a great banquet in his honor. Long into the night the feasting and singing and dancing continued, while Hearne and Matonabbee conversed with each other.

"White man," inquired the Indian, "will you search yet again for the Mountain of Copper?"

"Surely I will, if I can only find better guides," Hearne replied.

Then rising to his full height the chief said: "I, Matonabbee, have journeyed to the Far-Off-Metal River, and if the Great Chief at the fort will consent, I myself will guide thee thither."

Hearne was delighted. With a splendid guide like Matonabbee he felt sure of success. He assured the Indian that Governor Norton would accept his offer and provide all supplies for the journey.

As they travelled on towards the fort, they discussed plans for the expedition. Matonabbee, strangely enough,

attributed most of Hearne's hardships to the absence of women. "When all the men are heavy laden," he said, "they can neither hunt nor travel to any considerable distance, and in case they meet with success in hunting who is to carry the produce of their labor? Women were made for labor," he added. "One of them can carry or haul as much as two men can do. They also pitch our tents, make and mend our clothing and, in fact, there is no such thing as travelling any considerable distance or for any length of time in this country without their assistance. Women," said he again, "though they do everything, are maintained at trifling expense, for, as they always stand cook, the very licking of their fingers in scarce times is sufficient for their existence." Such, indeed, was the wretched condition of women among the Indians. They were the burdenbearers and slaves of the men.

On November 25th, Hearne reached Prince of Wales Fort, full of his project for a new expedition. Three days later Matonabbee also arrived. As Hearne had expected, the Governor fell in with their plans, and the stores of the fort were thrown wide open for equipping the party.

III. *Hearne's Third Journey*

In spite of the hardships he had suffered, Hearne did not linger to enjoy the ease of life at the fort, even though it was in the heart of the winter. In less than two weeks, such was his pluck and determination, all was in readiness for a start, and on December 7th, 1770, Hearne, with

Matonabbee as his guide, set forth for the third time for the distant Coppermine River.

This time, on the advice of Matonabbee, they took a more southerly course to avoid the Barren Lands where game and shelter at that season were difficult to secure. At the outset privation was again encountered. One of Matonabbee's caches, on which they had depended for food, was found rifled by another band of Indians. So they had to tighten their belts and press onward. For three days they subsisted on tobacco and snow water. The cold was intense. From morning till night they marched on doggedly, hauling the heavy sledges. The Indians, in spite of all, maintained their cheerfulness, but it was Christmas time and Hearne, in his bleak surroundings, could not but think fondly of home. "I could not refrain," he says, "from wishing myself again in Europe, if it had been only to have had an opportunity of alleviating the extreme hunger that I suffered with the refuse of the table of one of my acquaintances."

On the last day of the year they reached Nueltin Lake. Here there was plenty of fish, and here, too, they found the wives and children of many of the Indians of the party, tarrying till the men returned from the fort. There was now no lack of women to do the drudgery, to which Matonabbee had attributed the failure of previous attempts. The great Chief himself had no fewer than eight wives, which was quite in accord with his power and dignity.

Early in February they crossed the Kazan River and traversed the northern end of Lake Kasba on the ice,

and, by the 2nd of March, they were on the shores of Wholdaia or Pike Lake, the source of the Dubawnt River. Here they encountered a band of Northern Indians, who had lived all winter in ease and plenty by catching deer in a pound. Hearne gives an interesting account of this method of hunting. "When the Indians design to impound deer," he says, "they look out for one of the paths in which a number of them have trod, and which is observed to be still frequented by them. When these paths cross a lake, a wide river, or a barren plain, they are found to be much the best. The pound is built by making a strong fence with brushy trees. I have seen some that were not less than a mile round and am informed that there are others still more extensive. The entrance of the pound is not larger than a common gate, and the inside is so crowded with small counter-hedges as very much to resemble a maze, in every opening of which they set a snare made with thongs of deerskin, well twisted together, which are amazingly strong. A row of small brushwood is then stuck up in the snow on each side of the entrance. These poles or brushwood are generally placed at the distance of fifteen or twenty yards from each other and ranged in such a manner as to form two sides of a long, acute angle, growing gradually wider in proportion to the distance they extend from the entrance of the pound, which sometimes is not less than two or three miles, while the deer's path is exactly along the middle between the two rows of brushwood. When the Indians see any deer going that way men, women, and children walk along under

cover of the woods till they get behind them, then step forth to open view and proceed towards the pound in the shape of a crescent. The poor, timorous deer, finding themselves pursued and at the same time taking the two rows of brushy poles to be two ranks of people stationed to prevent their passing on either side, run straight forward in the path till they get into the pound. The Indians then close in and block up the entrance. The deer being thus enclosed, the women and children walk round the pound to prevent them from breaking or jumping over the fence, while the men are employed in spearing such as are entangled in the snares, and shooting with bows and arrows those which remain loose in the pound." Hearne thought this method of hunting, rather unsportsmanlike, and he greatly deplored the wastefulness of the Indians, who often killed far more than they could possibly consume.

Throughout March they wandered westward from Lake Wholdaia, and by April 8th, 1771, they had reached what the Indians called Little Fish Hill Lake. At this point Matonabbee resolved to turn northward. For ten days, however, they lingered to prepare a good supply of dried meat, for with the spring the deer were beginning to travel north-east from the woods to the Barren Lands. They also took care to secure a good supply of staves of birch wood, seven or eight feet long, for tent poles for use on the northern plains in summer and for snowshoe frames the next winter. At the same time they laid in a supply of other timber and of birch bark for building canoes.

Turning north, by May 2nd they reached Lake Clowey, whose waters apparently ran westward into Great Slave Lake. This seemed to be a well-known meeting place for the Indians, for other parties continually joined them, all supplied with materials for building canoes and journeying through the Barren Lands. Indeed, Lake Clowey, being on the edge of the Barrens, was an excellent rendezvous for this purpose.

For more than a fortnight they lingered here, and Hearne had a splendid chance of observing some of the Indian customs. One struck him as very amusing. If any warrior coveted any piece of property or even the wife of another, he would offer to wrestle him for them. Hearne was the witness of many a bloodless but spirited contest. "I never knew any of them receive the least hurt in any of these encounters," he tells us. "The whole business consists in hauling each other about by the hair of the head. They are seldom known either to strike or kick one another. It is not uncommon for one of them to cut off his hair and to grease his ears immediately before the contest begins. This, however, is done privately, and it is sometimes truly laughable to see one of the parties strutting about with a great air of importance and calling out 'Where is he? Why does he not come out?' when the other will bolt out with a clean-shorn head and greased ears, rush on his antagonist, seize him by the hair and, though perhaps a much weaker man, soon drag him to the ground, while the stronger is not able to lay hold on his opponent."

The names of the children were also curious. The boys were usually called by their parents by the name of some place, season, or animal. "The names of the girls," Hearne says, "are usually taken from some part or property of a marten, such as the White Marten, the Black Marten, the Summer Marten, the Marten's Head, the Marten's Foot, the Marten's Heart, and the Marten's Tail. Matonabbee's eight wives were all called Martens."

Many of the savages at Lake Clowey, when they learned that Hearne and Matonabbee were bound for the Coppermine River, joined them in order to strike a blow at their hereditary enemy the Eskimos. Hearne did not like this transformation of his peaceful exploring expedition into a bloodthirsty war party, but Matonabbee was as relentless as the rest in his determination to attack the hated foe, and so Hearne could do nothing. They simply laughed him to scorn as a coward when he remonstrated with them, and set about preparing wooden shields. These were about three-quarters of an inch thick, two feet broad, and three feet long, and were intended for protection against the Eskimo arrows.

The ardor of war now spurred on the party. At Lake Peshew they left most of the women and all the children behind, so that they could push more rapidly northward. "We no sooner began our march," Hearne narrates, "than the squaws and children set up a most woeful cry and continued to yell piteously as long as we were within hearing. This mournful scene had so little effect on my party that they walked away laughing and as merry as ever."

Their progress now was rapid. They crossed two large lakes on the ice — Artillery and Clinton-Golden Lakes, in all probability — and on June 21st Hearne noticed that the sun did not set. They were at last within the Arctic Circle. Next day they came to a river bearing the ponderous name of Conge-ca-tha-wha-chaga, where they met a new tribe, the Copper Indians, assembled as usual to kill the deer as they swam across the river.

The Copper Indians proved very hospitable. They prepared a great feast for the strangers, and Hearne smoked the peace calumet with them and gave them such gifts as he could spare from his scanty store. They expressed unbounded delight at the prospect of having the white men build a fort in their country. Hearne, indeed, was the first European they had ever seen. "It was curious to see," he says, "how they flocked about me and expressed as much desire to examine me from top to toe as a naturalist would a strange animal. They, however, found me to be a perfect human being except in the color of my hair and eyes; the former, they said, was like the stained hair of a buffalo's tail and the latter, being light, were like those of a gull."

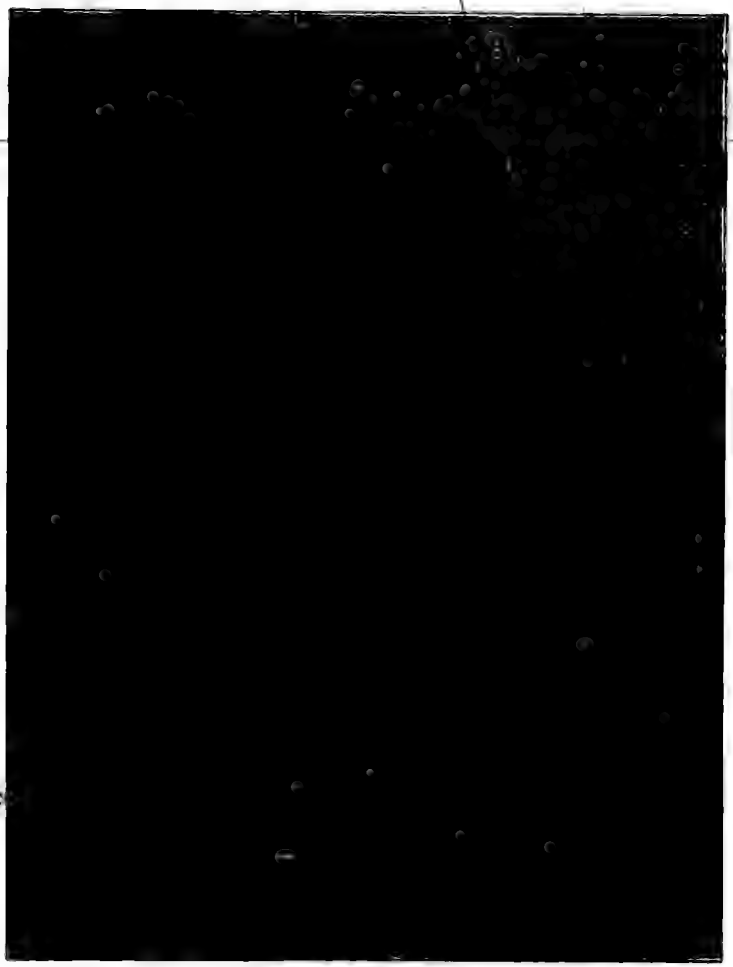
On July 2nd, their numbers swelled by many of the Copper Indians, they set off north-west overland through the Stony Mountains, for their goal, the Coppermine River. The way was rugged, and on the 6th a great fall of snow nearly buried them in the cave where they had sought shelter. But a thaw took away the snow as quickly as it had come, and in a day or two they were tormented by myriads of

mosquitoes as they went on again. At a place called Grizzled Bear Hill the traveller was astounded to find great boulders rolled from their beds and the earth plowed up in every direction by the huge bears in their search for ground squirrels. Evidently the grizzlies came from the woods to the westward to live on this prey in the summer.

At last, on July 13th, 1771, Hearne stood on the bank of the Far-Off-Metal River. As he gazed on its waters he was profoundly disappointed. The Indians had told of a mighty river up which ships might sail for many miles from its mouth. Instead it was only a stream one hundred and eighty yards wide, full of shoals and rapids, and scarcely navigable even for canoes.

But the Indians had forgotten all about Hearne and his mountain of copper. They were now within striking distance of the Eskimos, and the lust for blood was upon them. Sending their spies down towards the mouth of the river, they hunted the deer and cooked enough venison to do for some days, so that when they neared the Eskimos they would need to light no telltale fires. When the spies returned with the news that near the mouth of the river on the west side there were five tents of the enemy, the Indians were highly elated. They at once formed their plan of attack. Though they outnumbered the Eskimos two to one, they designed to steal up cautiously on them next night and slaughter them while they slept.

Crossing the river, they busied themselves with war-like preparations. Guns, spears, and shields were over-



AN ESKIMO FAMILY

hauled and put in good order. Each Indian painted his buckler with some figure, the sun or the moon, a bird or a beast of prey, or the pictures of imaginary beings whom they thought to dwell in the different elem of earth, sea, and air. On these beings the warriors for success in the battle.

Winding their stealthy way northward, always seeking the cover of the rocks and the hills, the Indians reached a point within two hundred yards of the Eskimo tents. Here they lay quiet in ambush while the last preparations were made. "These chiefly consisted," Hearne tells us, "in painting their faces, some all black, some all red, and others with a mixture of the two."

Thus rendered hideous, the Indians stole forward. It was one o'clock in the morning, but the Arctic sun hung red in the heavens and there was plenty of light for the frightful deed. The Eskimos were sound asleep, and the Indians crept up to the very eaves of the tents without being discovered. Then the air was rent by a chorus of terrible yells that told the poor Eskimos their dreaded foe was upon them.

To the rear stood Hearne, a helpless and horrified spectator of the awful scene. "'It was shocking beyond description," he tells us. "The poor, unhappy victims were surprised in the midst of their sleep and had neither time nor power to make any resistance. Men, women, and children ran out of their tents and endeavored to make their escape, but the Indians having possession of all the land side, to no place could they fly for shelter. One

alternative only remained, that of jumping into the river; but as none of them attempted it, they all fell a sacrifice to Indian barbarity. The shrieks and groans of the poor, expiring wretches were truly dreadful." With tears in his eyes and a sob in his throat, Hearne turned away. Fifty years later Sir John Franklin visited the scene of this massacre and found the bleaching bones of the Eskimos still strewing the ground. Long did the natives of the district remember this incident in the immemorial feud between Indians and Eskimos, and, in remembrance of it, the spot where the rushing and foaming current of the Coppermine takes its last leap before reaching the sea is suitably called to the present day Bloody Falls.

After the massacre followed plunder and wanton destruction. The Indians seized all the copper utensils for their own use, but the tents and tent poles were cast into the river, all the stores of dried salmon and musk-ox were destroyed, and the stone kettles were broken to pieces. Afar off, on the opposite bank of the river, another band of Eskimos, who had not been discovered by the spies, had been roused by the screams of their fellows to be the woeful spectators of the scene of death and ruin. The breadth and swiftness of the river protected these survivors from attack, but the Indians, in derision, climbed a hill and forming in a circle clashed their spears and shields together, uttered war-cries of victory, and continually called out, "Tima! Tima!" the Eskimo words for "What cheer!" Then they sat down, and, in full sight of their enemies, made a meal of the Arctic salmon that

abound in those waters. So numerous were these fish below the falls that, with a light pole armed with a few spikes, they could bring up at a jerk from the water from two to four fish.

From the high ground where he stood Hearne could see the ocean a few miles to the northward. He descended the stream to its mouth and, on July 17th, 1771, stood on the shore of the Arctic Sea. Along the coast there was a thread of open water upon which the sun's rays shimmered and danced, but beyond it to the horizon, north, east, and west, gleamed the unbroken white of the ice pack.

This was a second keen disappointment. Not only was the Coppermine River unnavigable, but the way to its mouth was blocked by the Arctic ice. Would the mountain of copper prove just as delusive as the other tales of the Indians? Hearne soon got his answer. Having erected a landmark and taken formal possession of the lonely land for the Hudson's Bay Company, he turned again inland to search for the copper deposits. Led by his Indians he reached one of the mines after a walk of about thirty miles south-east from the river's mouth. It was a desolate scene — nothing but a vast jumble of rocks, rent this way and that as though by a mighty earthquake. The Indians had said that the hills were entirely composed of the metal, all in lumps like pebbles and easy to carry away, but a search of four hours brought to light only one piece of any considerable size. This weighed four pounds. Hearne took it back to the fort, and the Hudson's Bay Company still have it in their possession. But

it was clear that no great mine of wealth lay here for the Merchant Adventurers. The mountain of copper was only an Indian myth.

The Indians themselves were not at all at a loss to explain the disappearance of the copper. They said that many, many years ago their ancestors had been led to the mountain of copper by a very old woman, and they could then get as much of the metal as they wished. But the old woman became greatly displeased with them and sat down on the ground, saying: "I shall sink into the earth and take all the copper with me." The Indians mocked her and went away. Next summer when they returned she was still there, but she had sunk into the ground up to her waist. The next year when they came back she had entirely disappeared, and with her had gone all the copper except the scattered fragments found still among the broken rocks. Such was their superstitious tale in explanation of the disappearance of the mountain of copper.

Hearne's mission was now accomplished. On this third trip he had travelled more than a thousand miles. It remained to make the long journey back to Fort Prince of Wales. On July 25th, wearied and footsore from forced marching, the party rejoined the squaws and the children. Game was plentiful, and they moved slowly southward. At this time occurred one of the saddest incidents of Indian life. One of the Indian's wives had been sick for a long time and was no longer able to keep up with the party. So she was left behind to perish. This was in accordance with the Indian custom, though

it was not always followed. The friends and relations, leaving some victuals and water and, if possible, a little firewood, would tell the sick one the path they were going to follow and then, covering him or her up with deerskins, would say farewell and walk away crying. Sometimes those so abandoned recovered and rejoined the tribe, but more often they met a lingering death by starvation. This poor woman caught up with the party three different times, but then, completely worn out, she dropped behind, and no one went back to help her.

By October, winter was closing in with gales of snow and hard frosts. For this season, the Indians announced their intention of going to the country of the Athapuscow Indians to hunt for moose, beaver, and marten, and, on December 24th, Hearne stood on the northern shore of Athapuscow or Great Slave Lake. From the Indian accounts he judged it correctly to be about three hundred miles in length. Here he spent his second Christmas in the wilds, alone with the savages, seven hundred miles from the nearest outpost of civilization at Churchill River. Of food there was this time a rude abundance, and though the days were short, with the sun in its circuit above the southern horizon scarcely rising at highest halfway up the trees, yet the Aurora Borealis flaming and rustling overhead, together with the moon and the stars, made night almost like day. "It was frequently so light all night," Hearne says, "that I could see to read a very small print. The Indians make no difference between night and day when they are hunting the beaver, but

those nocturnal lights are always found insufficient for the purpose of hunting deer or moose."

Early in January they crossed Great Slave Lake on the ice to its southern shore. "The scene was agreeably changed," Hearne records, "from an entire jumble of rocks and hills to a fine level country in which there was not a hill to be seen or a stone to be found. Buffalo, moose, and beaver were very plentiful, and we could discover the tracks of martens, foxes, and other animals of the fur kind." Hearne gives an accurate description of the great American bison, which thus is proved to have ranged as far north of the prairies as Great Slave Lake. Of the amazing strength and activity of these ponderous beasts he says, "When they fly through the woods from a pursuer they frequently brush down trees as thick as a man's arm and, be the snow ever so deep, such is their strength and agility that they are enabled to plunge through it faster than the swiftest Indian can run on snowshoes."

On January 16th they reached the "Grand Athapuscow" or Slave River. "The woods about this river," Hearne narrates, "particularly the pines and the poplars, are the tallest and stoutest I have seen in any part of North America. Some of this wood is large enough to make masts for the largest ships that are built."

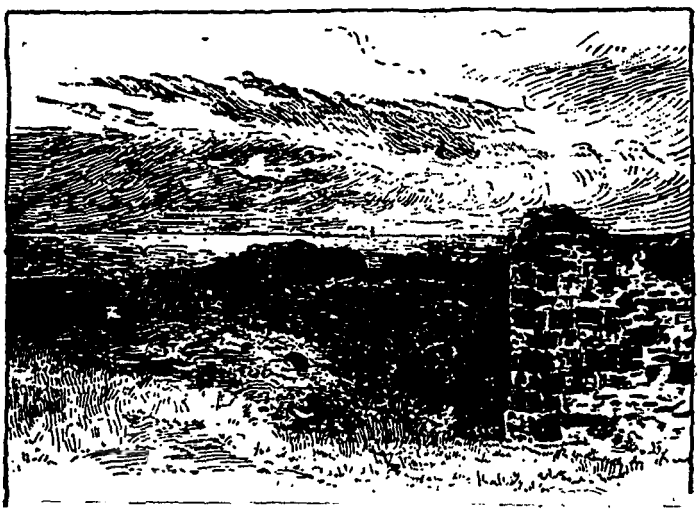
Wandering in this level woodland realm throughout the winter, they turned east in the spring. March found them once again in a country of hills and rocks. April saw signs of spring with the waterfowl streaming northward overhead. In May the snow and ice went with a rush,

and canoes were built for fording the streams of the Barren Lands. On the last day of May they crossed the Kazan River, and on June 30th, 1772, Hearne was welcomed back like a conqueror at Fort Prince of Wales. "I arrived in good health," he says, "having been absent eighteen months and twenty-three days on this last expedition; but from my first setting out with Chawchinahaw it was two years, seven months, and twenty-four days."

The Company of Adventurers were not unmindful of the services Hearne had performed. Two years later they chose him, as the most enterprising of their traders, to found the Company's first inland post at Cumberland House on the Lower Saskatchewan, and, in 1775, he was made Governor of Fort Prince of Wales on the Churchill River.

Hearne's fame, however, is that, not of the fur trader, but of the explorer. He had discovered many new rivers and lakes; he had pierced to the very heart of the Barren Lands, and many of the regions he then traversed have never since been pressed by the feet of civilized man. He had won his way to his goal, the Coppermine River, and of all white men was the first to reach the Arctic Ocean from the interior of America. His was the honor of finding Great Slave Lake and Slave River, and being the first to reach the basin of that mighty river system that Mackenzie was later to trace to its mouth. His journeys had proved at least two things. A North-West Passage through North America to the Western Sea did not exist. There might be a channel to the north of the solid continent, but if so it was so long and so ice-blocked as to be of no

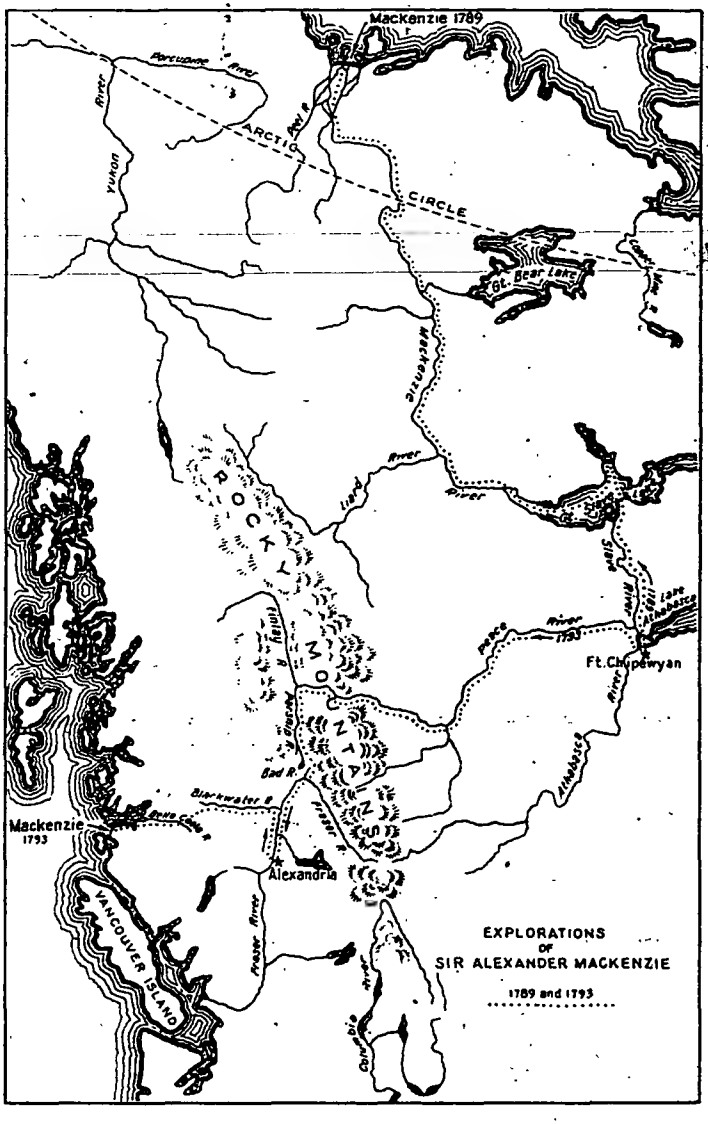
use as a trade route. The Western Sea itself, if it were not an idle fancy, must lie, as La Vérendrye had found, many hundreds of miles farther to the westward than he had been, and not but a few days' journey, as many had claimed, because no Indians were met with who ever had been to that sea. On the contrary, all said that still other tribes lived towards the sunset, where there was a hugh mountain chain beyond which "all rivers run to the westward." Hearne himself rightly claims that his journeys had "put a final end to all disputes concerning a North-West Passage through Hudson Bay," while the journal which he wrote of his travels remains to the present day in many respects the most authoritative work on the Far North of Canada.



Ruins of Fort Prince of Wales.

A short walk from the ruins of Fort Prince of Wales brings one to a little rocky inlet called Sloop Cove. There, carved by his own hand in the face of the cliff, may still be traced the words, "Sl Hearne, July ye 1, 1767." This simple legend preserves in the rock of that rugged land through which he wandered the name of one of the most hardy and intrepid explorers of the Great North-West.

SIR ALEXANDER MACKENZIE


Mackenzie 1789
Porcupine River
Yukon River
ARCTIC CIRCLE
Gt. Bear Lake
Mackenzie River
Liard River
ROCKY MOUNTAINS
Peace River 1793
Ft. Chipewyan
Athabasca
Bad R.
Blackwater R.
Fraser River
Mackenzie 1793
Alexandria
VANCOUVER ISLAND
EXPLORATIONS OF SIR ALEXANDER MACKENZIE
1789 and 1793

CHAPTER VII

SIR ALEXANDER MACKENZIE

I. *Mackenzie, the Young Nor'wester*

THE Western Sea! What magic for great souls had those words held! They had lured Hudson on to his sad destiny. With those words ringing ever in their ears, La Vérendrye and his sons had pressed onward towards the west, till the great mountain barrier reared itself above the plain and barred their further progress. To west and north Hearne had travelled inland from Hudson Bay a thousand miles and more, and yet no Western Ocean had met his gaze, but only mighty inland lakes and rivers and the frozen Arctic Sea.

SIR ALEXANDER MACKENZIE.

But men now knew beyond a doubt that there was a Western Sea. Long before Hearne's journey Vitus Bering, a Danish seaman sent out by Peter the Great, czar of all the Russias, had discovered the Strait that bears his name and that separates Asia from North America. In 1776 the famous Captain Cook had sailed along the coast of

what is now British Columbia and Alaska and had passed through Bering Strait into the Arctic Ocean. There was a Western Sea, then. Mariners had now sailed it from east to west and south to north. But who was to be the first to reach it overland and thus fulfill the dream that for three centuries had inspired heroic men to deeds of exploration? Who would first pierce through the mountains and possess themselves of the great Empire of the Pacific Coast with its wealth untold of furs and timber and gold?

There were keen rivals in the field to win this costly prize. To the south American traders were pressing up the Missouri to the foothills. To the north the ancient Company of Merchant Adventurers was awakening from its century of slumber on the shores of Hudson Bay and beginning to stretch its mighty arms south and west and north for trade. Far to the west Russian traders from Siberia were beginning to cross the sea to win fortunes in America. But most vigorous and aggressive of all was the famous North West Company of Canada. Trading up the Red, the Assiniboine, and the Saskatchewan Rivers, it soon began to reach out on either hand into the territories of its rivals and sent its traders south to the Missouri and north to the Churchill and the Athabaska.

The story of the Nor'westers is a wonderful romance. The victory of Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham had ended the long struggle between Britain and France for supremacy in North America. When New France fell, the French fur traders, who had followed in La Vérendrye's footsteps, packed their last load of peltries in their canoes and with-

drew from the Great West. For a little while the English Company had no competitor. Then came a change. Scottish and English traders hired French-Canadian canoemen, pushed through from Superior to Lake Winnipeg, and once again the merry *chansons* of the voyageurs were heard on the lakes and rivers of the West.

These new traders the old Hudson's Bay Company contemptuously termed "the peddlers," but they were too shrewd and energetic to be safely treated with contempt. By 1767 "the peddlers" were trading with the Crees and the Assiniboines near Fort La Reine on the Assiniboine River, and in the same year James Finlay, from Montreal, penetrated as far as the Saskatchewan. Peter Pond, Joseph and Thomas Frobisher, Thomas Currie, and other daring traders followed Finlay. These men, like the French before them, intercepted the Indians on their way to the forts on Hudson Bay and thus secured the choicest of the furs. Nor were the newcomers content to operate in the Saskatchewan Valley alone. They soon appeared in that north country where the Merchant Adventurers had never before had any rivals. By 1774 Joseph Frobisher had made his way northward from the Saskatchewan to the Churchill by way of Sturgeon or Cumberland Lake, the Sturgeon-Weir River, and Frog Portage, and two years later Thomas Frobisher erected a permanent fort on the Churchill for trade with the Indians of the Athabaska country on their way to Fort Prince of Wales.

But to sit like the Old Company on the edge of a great land and wait for trade was not the sort of life that ap-

pealed to these bustling traders. They must be ever pushing farther afield. So, in 1778, Peter Pond blazed the path still farther into the wilderness where yet no white man had been. He went up the Churchill to Île à la Crosse Lake and then, paddling through Lake Clear and Buffalo Lake, he ascended the shallow River La Loche to the lake of the same name. Here, following the old Indian trail now known as Portage La Loche or Methye Portage, Pond and his party with infinite labor climbed the high, rocky ridge that divides the waters flowing into Hudson Bay from those emptying into the Arctic Ocean.

As they surmounted the last rise a marvellous scene burst on their view. A thousand feet below lay a beautiful valley, walled in by two lofty, forest-clad heights. Through the midst of it wound a stream of crystal pure water, shining in the afternoon sun like a thread of silver, while to the blue mist that hung on the far horizon stretched a land of lawn and wood on which vast herds of buffalo and elk wandered at will to pasture. This was the valley of the Clearwater, a fitting gateway to the great countries of the Athabaska, the Peace, and the Mackenzie which lay beyond.

Quickly descending amid the grateful shade of the pines, Pond launched his canoes on the little stream and drifted down to the Athabaska. At this point the river is three-quarters of a mile wide, and his heart must have given a great leap as he swept out on its broad waters. Such a stream could flow only through a mighty land. On the Athabaska, about thirty miles from its mouth, he built a

fort called Old Pond Fort, and a little later he descended the river to Lake Athabaska itself. He was the first white man to stand on the shores of this "Lake of the Hills." The trader was now established in the very heart of the great Empire of the North. Though Pond knew it not, he stood also at the beginning of a path that led to another Empire of the Pacific and to the long sought Western Sea, for from the westward rolled the flood of the Peace River, and through the passes of the Upper Peace lay the road to the Pacific Ocean. But Pond had done his work in penetrating to the Athabaska. It remained for a greater than he, Alexander Mackenzie, to finish the quest on which so many brave hearts had joyously set forth and from which as yet not one had returned with victory.

Thirty miles off the west coast of Scotland lie the Outer Hebrides Islands like a long breakwater, thrown out to protect the mainland from the boisterous gales that sweep across the Atlantic. The largest of them is the Island of Lewis, and here, in 1763, in the little town of Stornoway, Alexander Mackenzie was born. The people of the Hebrides were a hardy fisher folk, born and bred to the life of the sea, and, as Alexander grew up, his bold spirit found pleasure in sharing the perils and hardships of the deep-sea fishermen. But he had received a good education; he was strong, intelligent, and ambitious. The little island did not give room for his restless energies, and so, in 1779, when only sixteen years of age, he took ship for Canada.

Here, indeed, was a land big enough even for him. For a thousand miles the incoming ship sailed up the mag-

nificent Gulf and River St. Lawrence before it reached Montreal. But this, as Alexander well knew, was only the entrance to Canada. Beyond Montreal lay the Great Lakes, and beyond them the Great Plains, and beyond them the Great Rocky Mountains, and beyond them again, somewhere, by a path no one yet had travelled, lay the Pacific, the Western Sea. Perhaps even then in his soul the resolve was made that he would find that way and solve that mystery. And in the sturdy frame of the Scottish lad, the level-poised head, the alert eye, the firm, clean-cut mouth, and the broad brow, crowned with its curly thatch of hair, there was abundant promise that from any task to which he had once set his hand he would not turn lightly back.

In those days the fur trade was the lodestone that attracted all adventurous spirits, and Mackenzie was soon in the midst of the great game. He was not long in learning how to play it. By this time most of the Montreal merchants, seeing that they must be united to compete with the Hudson's Bay Company with any success, had joined to form the North West Company. But some of them held aloof and established a rival firm which later came to be called the XY Co. It was to this smaller, opposition party that Mackenzie attached himself.

For five years he worked in the counting offices at Montreal, and then his keen business ability and complete mastery of all the points of the trade led his employers to place him in command of an expedition to Detroit. Mackenzie was yet only twenty-one years of age, but he led

his party successfully up the rapids of the St. Lawrence and through the wilds of Upper Canada, in which the United Empire Loyalists were then just beginning to settle. So successful was Mackenzie at Detroit that the very next year, 1785, he was made a "bourgeois" or partner in the Company and sent far into the western land, of which he had dreamed, to trade on the Churchill River.

Alexander Mackenzie and his cousin, Roderick, who was in the same Churchill district, got along in a friendly way with their rivals. Not so their partner, Peter Pond, the pioneer of the Athabaska. Hot-headed and quarrelsome, he got into a broil with Ross, the Nor'wester, and the latter was shot. The news of this bloodshed caused long debate when the partners of the two Companies met that summer, as was their custom, at Grand Portage at the head of Lake Superior. At last it was decided to club their interests together under the name of the North West Company, and the man who was sent to take charge of the difficult situation that had arisen on the Athabaska was Alexander Mackenzie.

And now behold the young adventurer, in the summer of 1787, making his way from Grand Portage back to the Churchill and thence by Peter Pond's route to the still more distant Athabaska. Seldom was it that a man of less than forty years was given a command under the Company. Mackenzie was only twenty-four, yet his indomitable industry and courage had made him, at that age, a Nor'west partner and had placed him in charge of the most coveted of all the fur districts. As Mackenzie reached the summit

of La Loche Portage and gazed down the valley of the Clearwater, and still more as he floated out upon the full current of the Athabaska and later stood on the shores of the great lake into which it poured its waters, his spirit must have expanded within him. Here, indeed, was a realm worthy of conquest and he, Alexander Mackenzie, must be the man to wrest from it the secrets that lay hidden within its borders.

Mackenzie was soon at work. His keen mind at once grasped the fact that Lake Athabaska was the hub of the whole region. It tapped the Peace from the west, the Athabaska from the south, the Slave from the north, and the Barren Lands from the east. Accordingly, he had constructed on its shores Fort Chipewyan, which from that time to the present has been the great emporium of the northern fur trade. From this as a centre, the French-Canadian Leroux was dispatched to develop trade on that Great Slave Lake which Hearne had visited sixteen years before. Other traders were sent up the Peace and the Athabaska, and from this far distant north-west great cargoes of furs were sent down to Grand Portage the next summer.

But Mackenzie was no mere fur trader, seeking to pile up gold. In him burned the quenchless spirit of the explorer. The unknown was a challenge which he could not resist. Whence came the mighty Peace River? Whither flowed the still mightier stream formed by its junction with the Athabaska? Hearne had reached the Arctic along the Coppermine, but that puny river could not be the

outlet for these vast waters. Indians spoke of a river flowing out of Great Slave Lake far to the west and the north. Did it find its outlet in the Arctic or in the long sought Sea of the West? He must solve these questions. Even though his journeys might lead only to the frozen Arctic, they would add to the sum of men's knowledge and open up new regions for trade.

So Mackenzie made his resolve. By the beginning of June, 1789, the canoes, filled with the season's pelts for the distant Grand Portage and Montreal, were dispatched on their long voyage. For the summer months Mackenzie was free. He could now take in hand the project he had long had at heart. He would travel down the north-flowing river to its mouth, wherever it might be.

II. *Mackenzie's First Journey*

Mackenzie knew that the short northern summer would barely suffice for the trip downstream and the toilsome return against the current, and so he hurried his preparations. By June 3rd all was in readiness for the race to the sea. "We embarked at nine o'clock in the morning at Fort Chipewyan on the south shore of the Lake of the Hills in a birchbark canoe." Thus unassumingly commences the record of one of the most remarkable journeys of exploration in the history of North America.

Mackenzie took his place in the largest canoe manned by four cheerful and sturdy French-Canadian voyageurs and a young German named Steinbruck. In a smaller canoe with his two wives travelled the guide, a Chipewyan

Indian, called the English Chief because of the many journeys he had made across the Barrens to the Hudson's Bay Company's posts. He had been one of Matonabbee's braves on Hearne's famous third journey and was well and favorably known throughout the North Land. Two other Indians, engaged as interpreters and hunters, followed in a third canoe, while in a fourth, loaded high with goods, were Leroux and his men, who were to remain on Great Slave Lake for trade. Already this hardy Canadian had spent two winters on the lake, and two trading posts had been built there. So the first part of the journey was over known ground.

Amid cheers and a salvo of musket shots, the party pushed gaily out from the wooded point of land on which old Fort Chipewyan stood. A paddle of twenty miles westward along the south shore of the lake, and then seven miles north across its glassy surface, brought them to the entrance to the Slave River, which they commenced to descend. Mackenzie notes the remarkable fact that usually this river flows out of Lake Athabaska to the north, but when the Peace is in flood the current of the Slave is reversed and it pours its waters backward into the lake.

The Kitche Okema, as Mackenzie was called by his Indians, was strict with his men. The first day they had made but thirty-seven miles. That was not enough to suit him. Next morning he roused his party at four, and by half-past seven at night they had traversed sixty-two miles. The next day they were off at three, and so day by day, from morning till night, they pressed on — or rather

from twilight to twilight, for all the night through the red and gold of the sunken sun colored the northern sky and as they progressed ever northward increasingly changed night into day. But, though Mackenzie was exacting, he was just, and his very strictness won the confidence and respect of his men and was one of the secrets of his success.

On the second day they passed the mouth of the Peace sweeping majestically down through a channel more than a mile broad into the Slave. On June 5th a dull roar ahead warned them that they were approaching a rapid. In fact, it proved to be a series of rapids, and all day long they labored loading and unloading the canoes and transporting them and the baggage across the portages. One of the women tried to save herself trouble by running her canoe through a rapid, but the swirling water gripped it and dashed it to destruction at the foot of the falls. All her goods were lost, though she herself, almost by a miracle, reached shallow water and dragged herself exhausted to land. Worn out with their labor the party camped at five in the afternoon, and a joyous shout from the voyageurs hailed the arrival of the hunters with seven geese, a beaver, and four ducks for dinner.

But tired though they were, rest was difficult. All day the mosquitoes hung about them in clouds, and all night the shrill war-cry of these pests filled the air and their stings tormented the travellers. So, at half-past two, they were off again, and by six in the evening they had covered seventy-two miles. Then came a change in the weather. A hurricane of wind lashed the water and compelled them

to land. A torrent of rain descended which drove through the tents and drenched them to the skin, while it grew so cold that the Indians put on their mittens. The men huddled together for warmth and smoked in stolid discomfort. A night and a day passed thus, and then on the morning of June 9th the weather cleared, and a few miles' travel brought them to Great Slave Lake. In less than a week, in spite of all difficulties, they had covered two hundred and seventy-two miles.

It was a dreary prospect that now met their gaze. Except for a strip of open water along the shore, ice still covered the great lake — ice that stretched unbroken to the horizon and looked like the packs of the Arctic Sea. Yet, wonderful to relate, though the ground had thawed only to a depth of fourteen inches, the trees on the shores of river and lake were in full leaf. There were myriads of wild fowl on the mud banks and in the reedy marshes. The Indians said that both to east and west of the Slave there were great plains on which buffalo roamed and that moose and reindeer and beaver were plentiful in the neighboring woods. The lake swarmed with fish. It was evident that if they had to wait for the moving of the ice there would at least be no lack of provisions.

Great Slave Lake was the centre of the land of the Chipewyan Indians, and Mackenzie, like Hearne, records many odd things about them. Their ideas of the creation of the world and of heaven and hell were very curious. "They believe," he says, "that at first the globe was one vast and entire ocean, inhabited by no living creature

except a mighty bird whose eyes were fire, whose glances were lightning, and the clappings of whose wings were thunder. On his descent to the ocean and touching it, the earth instantly arose and remained on the surface of the waters. This bird then called forth all the varieties of animals from the earth except the Chipewyans, who were produced from a dog. This causes their aversion to the flesh of that animal as well as to those who eat it. They believe also that in ancient times their ancestors lived till their feet were worn out with walking and their throats with eating. They describe a deluge when the waters spread over the whole earth except the highest mountains, on the tops of which they preserved themselves. They believe that immediately after their death they pass into another world, where they arrive at a large river, on which they embark in a stone canoe, and that a gentle current bears them on to an extensive lake, in the centre of which is a most beautiful island. In view of this they receive judgment for their conduct during life. If their good actions are declared to predominate they are landed upon the island, where there is to be no end to their happiness. But if their bad actions weigh down the balance, the stone canoe sinks at once and leaves them up to their chins in the water to behold and regret the reward enjoyed by the good, and eternally struggling, but without avail, to reach the blissful island from which they are excluded forever."

For five days the restless Mackenzie chafed at delay, and then a westerly wind opened up a lane in the ice, and they started northward. Time and again the ice closed, com-

pelling them to seek shelter on the little islands that dot the surface of the lake. On one of these islands they found a small herd of reindeer, marooned like themselves by the drifting ice, and so they had plenty of fresh meat. The mosquitoes no longer annoyed them, but the cold at night was a hardship. Though it was June 21st, it froze so hard that the open water was covered with a film of ice an eighth of an inch thick.

At last they reached the north side of the lake, and there they encountered three lodges of Red Knife or Copper Indians, so called because of their copper weapons and utensils. They knew nothing, they said, of the great river which Mackenzie sought, except that it flowed out of the west end of the lake. So he procured a guide from them, and, leaving Leroux to conduct the trade on the lake, he continued his search for the western outlet. It proved a baffling quest. Day after day they poked in and out among the islands and marshes trying to find an exit, but in vain. The Red Knife guide, it was clear, knew no more about the way than they did themselves, and the English Chief was so enraged that he threatened to murder him. Finally, however, on June 29th, on rounding a long island, they found themselves carried along by a current, and soon the lake shores narrowed into the banks of a great river flowing to the west.

Twenty precious days had been spent on Great Slave Lake. But a steady breeze now blew from the east and, hoisting sails on their canoes, they scudded lightly before it. They met many bands of Indians, Beavers, Slaves,

Dog-ribs, Hares, and others, for the river was the great highway of the country. But they were all very shy and fled at the approach of the strangers. This was because of the raids of the Crees. From the Saskatchewan, war parties of these doughty braves penetrated far into the north, and Mackenzie found traces of their ravages even beyond the Liard River. As the Iroquois laid the fear of death on the St. Lawrence valley, and the Sioux were the dread of the plains, so the Crees seem to have been the terror of all the north country. Once, when Mackenzie encamped at the foot of a high hill, he took the fancy to climb it and view the land from its summit. After a hard climb of an hour and a half he reached the top, only to find it occupied by an Indian encampment. Often the less warlike tribes dwelt in such inaccessible places as these, to be safe from the terrible Crees.

And indeed the Indians of the Mackenzie valley were very primitive and ill-equipped for war. Their only axes were of stone, attached by a deerskin thong to a wooden handle about two feet long. They had bows and arrows, the latter pointed with bone, horn, flint, copper, and sometimes iron. Their spears were six feet in length and pointed with bones. Their daggers were of horn or bone, flat and sharp-pointed, and they also carried a sort of club made from the antlers of the reindeer. But these things were of little avail against the superior weapons that the Crees were now getting in trade from the white men.

Presents of beads, looking-glasses, knives, and other trifles soon overcame the first shyness of the Indians

towards Mackenzie, and they approached to marvel at the strange white men and their wonderful possessions. The firearms that were endowed with the power of sudden and magic death filled them with awe, and more than once Mackenzie was asked by the Indians not to let them off in their presence. They were unacquainted both with tobacco and firewater, and when these were offered to them they accepted them more to oblige their visitors than because they enjoyed them.

Mackenzie always inquired of the Indians he met what was the character of the river that lay below them. The answers he got were wonderful but very unsatisfactory. They told him that the river was full of impassable falls and rapids, that it would require several winters to get to the sea, that old age would come upon them before their return, and that the path was beset with monsters of horrid shapes and evil powers. One party even went so far as to point out a distant island and declare that behind it there was a Manitou in the river which swallowed every person who approached it. "As it would have required half a day to have indulged our curiosity," Mackenzie dryly remarks, "we proceeded on our voyage."

These foolish tales had no effect on the white men, but Mackenzie's superstitious Indians were panic-stricken. They were tired of the journey. They were afraid of the Eskimos. Never had they travelled so incessantly before. They would have deserted, but they were now far from their own country among strange tribes whom they feared. Afraid to go on and yet more afraid to desert, their state

was a wretched one. But all their complaints and forebodings fell unheeded on their imperious master. All his restless energy was centered in pushing on to his goal, the mouth of the river, and whither he led they found that they must follow.

On July 1st they passed the mouth of the River of the Mountain — now the Liard. The next day far ahead to the west they sighted the Rockies. "We perceived," Mackenzie says, "a high mountain which appeared on our nearer approach to be rather a cluster of mountains, stretching as far as our view could reach to the southward and whose tops were lost in the clouds." Was this the same mountain range that far to the south had barred La Vérendrye's way to the Western Sea? Mackenzie believed that it was, and the conviction began to be borne in upon him more and more strongly that he who would reach that Sea must first find a path through the silent peaks to the westward.

Some distance below, a spur of the mountains crossed the river, the course of which for several hundred miles now lay between two parallel ranges. The peaks were always in sight, shining marble-white in the sunny distance. The weather was warm, as they were nearing the region of perpetual day. But, in spite of the sun and the force of the current, masses of ice still clung to the river bank in many places, and the ground was thawed only to a depth of a few inches.

On July 5th they passed the mouth of the Great Bear River. Through this the waters of the lake of the same

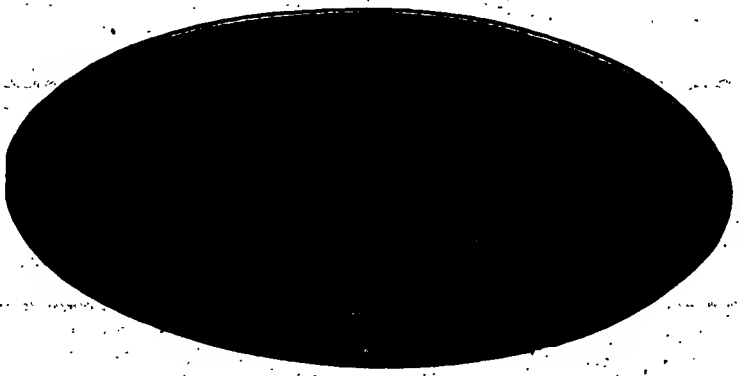
name, the largest lake in the Northland, pour into the Mackenzie in a peculiar greenish current, like the waters of the sea. One hundred and fifty miles farther downstream they came to the most striking part of the entire course of the great river. Here suddenly it narrows from a breadth of several miles to five hundred yards, and flows on, deep, calm, and majestic, between tree-crowned banks, rising sheer and rugged from the water's edge to a height of one hundred and twenty-five to two hundred and fifty feet. The great limestone cliffs which form this mighty gorge, fashioned by nature into the semblance of a giant battlement, have been named the Ramparts of the Mackenzie.

On July 9th they encountered a tribe of Indians much superior in intelligence to those of the upper river. They told Mackenzie that he would sleep ten nights before he reached the sea. One of their number also was willing to act as his guide. Encouraged by this most welcome news, Mackenzie pressed eagerly on.

The very next day the river began to be divided by many islands, and they were confronted with a maze of channels. The guide, terrified at the prospect of meeting the dreaded Eskimos, wished to keep to the east, but Mackenzie chose the large middle channel. The guide then rebelled, and the Chipewyans, alarmed at their distance from home and the unknown dangers before them, demanded that the party turn back. But the French-Canadians were loyal to a man. "For some time back," writes Mackenzie. "their spirits were animated by the expectation that

another day would bring them to the *Mer d'Ouest* and even in our present situation they declared their readiness to follow me wherever I should be pleased to lead them." The old adventurous spirit of La Salle and La Vérendrye burned in the breasts of these humble but heroic voyageurs and helped their leader in the crisis. The Indians were soothed by the promise that if they did not reach the sea within seven days he would turn back, and they then resumed the journey.

That night they pitched their tents near an abandoned Eskimo camp. Mackenzie sat up to observe the sun and was gratified to find that it did not sink below the horizon. They were in the land of the Eskimos and within the Arctic



The Mouth of the Mackenzie by the Light of the Midnight Sun.

Circle. They must be near the sea. At half-past twelve he roused one of his tired men to behold the spectacle of the midnight sun. Rubbing his eyes the man sat up, and when he saw the sun so high he thought it time to start,

and began calling his comrades. Great was their astonishment when they were told that it was just past midnight, and that the sun had never set.

Next day, July 12th, they paddled on down the middle channel, finding more traces of the Eskimos. The soil on the banks was not thawed more than four inches deep, and yet it was carpeted with the bright green grass, the mosses, and the beautiful flowers which Hearne had seen in the Barren Lands. It was strange to behold this verdure growing on a film of earth, while ice still caked the river bank and snowdrifts filled the hollows. Such trees as there were were spruce, larch, and birch. They were gnarled and knotted dwarfs, only a few feet high, but often two or three hundred years old. The wonder was, however, that trees would grow at all in such a soil.

The river now broadened out into what appeared to be a great lake. In reality it was the wide river mouth of the central channel of the Mackenzie delta. Though the explorer did not know it he had reached his goal, the sea. They camped on a high island, and Mackenzie and the English Chief climbed to its loftiest point to survey the scene. To the west lay open water, but from the south-west far around to the eastward extended a solid sweep of ice. South-west on the distant horizon and running far to the north could still be seen the white, phantom outline of the mountains. No land appeared ahead, but to the east lay many islands. "My men," says Mackenzie, "could not at this time refrain from expressions of real concern that they were obliged to return without reaching

the sea." But both leader and men were soon to be undeceived. Early that night they were compelled to get up hastily to rescue the baggage from the rising flood. Was it the tide, or simply the wind heaping the water up against the shore? Next morning they knew. Mackenzie was roused by the shouts of his men. Far out on the open water objects, which they had at first taken to be cakes of ice, had suddenly come to life and were actively disporting themselves. What were these strange animals? The inland voyageurs did not know, but Mackenzie, bred to the life of the sea, knew that they were whales. They had reached the Arctic Ocean. Their quest was at an end.

The men went wild with excitement. In a trice the canoe was ready, and, with flashing paddles, they were off in mad pursuit. But at their approach the great fish dived, and soon a fog settled down over the water, which brought an end to the chase. "It was indeed a very fortunate circumstance that we failed to overtake them," writes Mackenzie, "as a stroke from the tail of one of these enormous fish would have dashed the canoe to pieces." In honor of the event Mackenzie called the island Whale Island, and near their camp he put up a memorial of their visit. On July 14th, 1789, he records: "This morning I ordered a post to be erected close to our tents, on which I engraved the latitude of the place, my own name, the number of persons which I had with me, and the time I remained here."

For two days longer they remained at the mouth of the great river, coasting among its islands and trying to get

into touch with the Eskimos. But the Eskimos were far afield fishing for whales and hunting the reindeer, and the search for them proved fruitless. So, on July 16th, they turned southward. "We made for the river," Mackenzie says, "and stemmed the current."

It was easy travelling in the delta, but when they reached the main stream the strong current, which before had borne them so swiftly northward, was now against them. Frequently it was necessary to land and tow the canoe with a line. This was the hardest of work. The narrow shore was strewn with rough fragments from the rocky banks. Moccasins wore out and the men became weary and footsore. So arduous was it that those in the canoes had to relieve those on shore every two hours. But they were now facing homeward, and were inspired by the consciousness of having performed a great deed. Success, too, had given Mackenzie a greater ascendancy than ever over his men, and under his tireless leadership they made good progress.

On their way up the great river they met many tribes of Indians whom they had missed on their way down, and the explorer constantly questioned them about their country, particularly about the region to the westward. Of this he was told marvellous tales. From the Eskimos the Indians said they had heard of white men far towards the setting sun in the land across the great mountains. They came in canoes big as islands to a great lake called Belhoullay Toe, or the White Man's Lake. Beyond the mountains was a great river, mightier they said than even the Mackenzie, which flowed westward to the lake.

This river, of which the Indians had heard rumors, was doubtless the Yukon, and the White Man's Lake was the Pacific. Mackenzie, even at that late season, would have struck out overland to reach this westward-flowing river, but all his attempts to secure a guide failed. All the natives were too terrified to venture into the strange land beyond the mountains, and it was no wonder, if they really believed the stories which they told about it. The inhabitants of that country, they said, were of gigantic stature and adorned with wings. They possessed canoes larger than Mackenzie's. They fed on large birds and could devour a beaver at a single meal. They could slay common men with their eyes, and it would be sure death for any one to venture thither.

Impatient with these fables, Mackenzie pushed forward. On August 2nd they passed the mouth of the Great Bear River. A few miles above this point they were astounded to find the bank of the river on fire. A closer examination showed that it was a seam of coal burning slowly. From Mackenzie's day to our own this fire has smoldered on, and for two miles along the river at this point smoke may be observed pouring upward from the fire, now far down under the earth. At the same spot they found a sort of white, sticky mud which the Indians sometimes ate, and which they used as a gum for chewing. The explorers tasted it, and found that it had a pleasing, milky flavor.

On August 14th they reached the Liard, and two days later they paddled out through reedy shallows on to the broad expanse of Great Slave Lake. There they were re-

joined by Leroux, who had had a profitable summer's trade. On August 30th, the explorer paid off his Indians, and continued his way southward up the Slave River. He reached Fort Chipewyan on September 12th, 1789. He had been absent exactly one hundred and two days, during which he had traversed nearly three thousand miles and had explored to its mouth a hitherto unknown river that was no unworthy rival to the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence.

III. *Mackenzie's Second Journey*

Though his exploit had been one of the most notable in all the brilliant annals of North American exploration, yet Mackenzie himself was dissatisfied with his achievement. He called the great stream that now bears his name the "River Disappointment," for he had hoped to reach the open Western Sea and instead had found only the ice-choked Arctic. Even there he had still seen the mountains stretching ever farther northward. Like La Vérendrye, he now concluded that these mountains could not be outflanked. They must be pierced. But where? The Frenchman, when death overtook him, was about to ascend the Saskatchewan to its sources. At Mackenzie's door flowed another river, the Peace, which from its very greatness must take its rise far in the heart of the western mountains. Could he but reach those upper waters and set foot upon the height of land, he would soon portage across to westward-flowing streams and float down them to the sea.

More and more irresistible became his desire to perform this deed. He could not rest with this great mystery

unsolved. He could not let the Spaniard from Mexico and the Russian from Siberia win the Pacific slope when, by a bold effort, it was possible to press through from the plains and gain for Britain her share in the wealth of that new land. What mattered it that his partners in the North West Company treated his first voyage with jealous silence and would not take up a vigorous policy of exploration? He would put his own courage and resources into the task, and if determination could win then he would not fail.

With Mackenzie to resolve was to act. In the autumn of 1791, at his own expense he took the long journey to London, there to acquire that knowledge of astronomy, the lack of which had greatly hampered him in accurately tracing his first voyage. Having spent the winter in study, he purchased the best instruments that money could buy and then took ship for Canada. October, 1792, found him once more on Lake Athabaska and ready for the great enterprise.

Mackenzie's plan was to winter on the Peace River and, with the spring, make a dash westward for the Sea. On October 10th the party started from Fort Chipewyan, and by the 12th were paddling up the main stream of the Peace. They passed Peace Point, the spot on which long ago Cree and Beaver Indians had composed their strife and thus given a name to both the point and the river. Portaging around the twenty-foot fall that breaks the lower course of the Peace, they reached the Old Establishment, the Company's first fort on the river. It had already been abandoned, but it is interesting as having been the scene

of the first agricultural experiment in that country. "In the summer of 1788," Mackenzie says, "a small spot was cleared at the Old Establishment and sown with turnips, carrots, and parsnips. The first grew to a large size and the others thrived very well, and experiment was also made with potatoes and cabbages, the former of which were successful, but, for lack of care, the latter failed. There is not the least doubt but the soil would be very productive if a proper attention was given to its preparation." Such was the first small beginning of agriculture in that great northern granary of Canada.

Six miles beyond the point where the Smoky River joins the Peace, Mackenzie halted and set his men to the task of building winter quarters. The cold days were now upon them, and they worked as busily as beavers to erect shelter. By the New Year they were all safely housed in a stout, palisaded fort, and able to defy the coldest weather. At times the thermometer did fall many degrees below zero, but the winter was broken by the most remarkable mild spells, caused by the warm south-west chinook winds blowing across the mountains from the Pacific. "On December 29th," wrote Mackenzie, "a rumbling noise was heard in the air like distant thunder, when the sky cleared away in the south-west, from whence there blew a perfect hurricane which lasted till eight. Soon after it commenced, the atmosphere became so warm that it dissolved all the snow on the ground; even the ice was covered with water and had the same appearance as when it is breaking up in the spring."

From the Indians Mackenzie heard of a great river on the other side of the mountains flowing towards the sunset. These tidings only whetted his impatience to be off. In April, spring came with all its Northern suddenness. In a few days the snow vanished, the grass was green, and flowers blossomed everywhere. On the 25th the ice on the river went out with a rush, and by the end of the month the furs were packed and shipped off by canoes for Grand Portage. Then on May 9th, 1793, they stood ready to take the plunge into the unknown land that lay to westward.

The party consisted of Mackenzie, Alexander Mackay, a trusted veteran of the fur trade, six French-Canadian voyageurs, two of whom had been with Mackenzie on his first voyage, and two Indians to serve as guides, hunters, and interpreters. Their canoe was a beauty, thirty feet long, twenty-six inches deep, and four feet nine inches broad. So light was it that on a good road two men could carry it three or four miles without resting, yet it could hold with ease the ten men and their three thousand pounds of baggage. As they pushed off from midstream some of the Indians left behind, Mackenzie tells us, "shed tears on the reflection of those dangers which we might encounter in our expedition, while my own people offered up their prayers that we might return in safety."

Had the explorers known the hardships and perils that were before them they might well have been daunted. But for a time all went well. Their way lay through what Mackenzie called "the most beautiful scenery I have ever

beheld." The country was like a great park, groves of trees alternating with open, rolling prairie, and everywhere it was alive with game. They saw vast herds of elk and buffalo, the latter with their young frisking gaily about them. They came upon bear tracks too, measuring nine inches wide, and on May 16th Mackenzie writes, "We this day saw two grizzly and hideous bears." The Indians were in great terror of these animals and never ventured to attack them except in parties of three or four strong.

On the afternoon of May 17th they caught a glimpse of the snowclad peaks of the Rockies, and a mountain keenness began to pervade the air. Then the river banks grew higher, until they were two rocky precipices that excluded all view of the surrounding country. The current became swifter, so that they had to pole instead of paddle. Soon the river narrowed till in places it was but fifty yards across, while all ahead the canyon roared and echoed with the rushing waters. Mackenzie climbed a hill, only to find that as far as he could see the river was a series of foaming rapids and leaping cataracts. There was nothing for it but to keep on. When poling was impossible, they tracked the canoe with their sixty fathom line. Once, in the midst of a dangerous rapid, a wave struck the canoe head on, and the towing rope parted. For one tense moment there flashed across Mackenzie's mind the vision of his canoe wrecked, his supplies lost, his expedition ruined — but almost by a miracle the next wave cast the canoe ashore, where it was made fast by the men. On another occasion those on the towline came to a sheer face of solid rock where

there was no room for them to pass. It looked as though the obstacle were insurmountable, but Mackenzie was as ready as any of his men to imperil his life for the success of the undertaking. Seizing an axe, he began to cut foot-holds in the rock. One false move and he would have been hurled to destruction in the torrent below, but, step by step, he got across. Then, leaping down to a small rock ahead, he caught the others on his shoulders as they followed him, and thus they were able to go on.

Day after day they persevered. Foot by foot they fought their way up the gorge of the Peace. At last flesh and blood could do no more. The voyageurs, hardy and cheerful though they were, began to mutter threateningly. Far as the eye could reach was nothing but foaming waters and precipitous banks, ever seeming to grow more impassable. It was madness, the men said, to further attempt the passage of such a river. They must turn back.

But to turn back was the last thing Mackenzie would consent to. If they could not ascend the gorge, then they must portage around it, even though the portage should be over a mountain top. The explorer called a halt. Next day Mackay was sent in advance to seek a path along the river's edge to a point where it again became navigable. He returned with the news that it would be nine miles overland through thick woods, high hills, and deep valleys before they could again launch their canoe. Mackenzie was resolute to make the attempt, but to inspire his men he used a little cunning. He prepared a special feast, "A kettle of wild rice," he says, "sweetened with sugar,

with their usual regale of rum, soon renewed that courage which disdained all obstacles that threatened our progress, and they went to rest with a full determination to surmount them on the morrow."

Next day they began the portage. It was stubborn work. First the baggage had to be carried two hundred feet or more up the precipitous bank, where a false step would have hurled the voyageur to instant death. Then, with infinite labor, the canoe was warped to the top by passing the line around tree trunks. On they went in the same fashion up the mountain side. Four of the party now had to be detached to clear a way through the woods, while the others strained at the heavy packs and toiled onward with the canoe. It was uphill work till noon of the second day, when the ground began to slope gently downward again. They had crossed the summit of the Rockies, but high though they were they could see little, for still higher peaks soared white above them on all sides. On the evening of the second day they camped, dead tired, near the tongue of a glacier, from which flowed an ice-cold rivulet

Carrying Supplies Over a Portage.

of purest water. At four o'clock on May 24th the gleaming water of the Peace, to their inexpressible joy, was again beheld through the trees, and the exhausted explorers launched their canoe once more upon its current. They had crossed what is now called Rocky Mountain Portage. The Rockies, through which the Peace thus cuts its furious way, were now behind them, but far ahead they were dismayed to see still another range towering aloft to bar their westward way.

On May 31st they stood at the forks of the Peace. Were they to ascend the Finlay coming from the north-west or the Parsnip flowing from the south-east? The voyageurs wished to go up the former, which was the broader and gentler stream, but Mackenzie, much to their disgust, chose the latter, for an old Indian had told him that it was from the headwaters of this that a portage led to a great river where the Indians built houses and lived upon islands. This river must flow to the Pacific, and could he but launch his canoe upon it, he felt that success would be within his grasp.

The snows were melting in the mountains, and the Finlay was a raging torrent, difficult to stem. In the first afternoon they covered only two or three miles, but they kept on. Often they had to land to repair their canoe. Often the water was so high that they got in among the trees of the forest that bordered the stream and pulled themselves along by the branches. Everywhere, however, as they advanced there was abundant evidence that even if their toil should not open up a way to the Western Sea, yet they

were penetrating a country of great value to the fur trader. "In no part of the North-West," says Mackenzie, "did I see so much beaver work. In some places they had cut down several acres of large poplars, and we saw also a great number of these active and sagacious animals. The time which these wonderful creatures allot for their labors is the whole of the interval between the setting and the rising sun."

Often the men grew sullen and discontented and wished to turn back, but Mackenzie's ardor rose superior to every trial, and by the example which he set and the continual words of hope and inspiration which he addressed to them he kept them at their task. Nor was their progress without some little encouragement. One day they spied a party of Rocky Mountain Indians. At first the savages were greatly alarmed at the apparition of these strange white men, but after a little while, won over by trifling gifts, they were induced to approach. They had heard of white men before, they said, but never till now had they seen them. They knew of a large river flowing towards the midday sun which the White Chief would reach by continuing his course and crossing the portage. To the west of them, also, they said, lived the Carrier Indians, who traded between the Mountain Indians and those of the coast. The latter lived in houses on the shores of the "Stinking Lake," as they called the ocean, and thither white men had come in great ships with sails like clouds. Were these the Spaniards, or the Russians, or the British under Captain Cook, who just a little while before had sailed along the coast of what is now British Columbia? Mackenzie did

not know, but the tidings of these white men and of the great river to the southward buoyed him up in his hope of reaching the sea.

Mackenzie had missed the mouth of the Pack or McLeod's Lake River, because it was concealed behind a wooded island. Had he found and followed it he could have reached the Fraser by a much easier route. As it was, he kept on up the Parsnip until at last on Tuesday, June 11th, 1793, they reached the shore of a little lake, blue as the sky that topped the encircling mountain peaks. Mackenzie was now at one of the sources of the mighty river that takes its name from him. Four years ago he had stood two thousand four hundred and twenty miles downstream at the point where the waters of the lake at his feet were destined to find their ultimate home in the Arctic Ocean. Over every mile of that vast distance the intrepid explorer had now travelled. His was the honor of being first at the mouth and first at the source of one of the world's greatest rivers.

They stood upon the Great Divide. Eight hundred and seventeen paces across a low, rocky ridge brought them to another little lake, from which ran a brawling mountain stream. On this they launched their canoe. They were now on waters tributary to the Fraser, the third largest river of the Pacific coast, and of all white men they were the first to float down a stream which flowed, though far to southward, into the Western Sea.

Mackenzie called the little river they were now descending the Bad River, and good reason they had so to remember

it. They had not gone far when the violence of the current dashed the stern of the canoe upon a rock. The steersman lost control, and next instant the boat swung round and the bow was shattered upon the other bank. One man, thrown out by the shock, luckily found refuge on a sand bank. Another, as the canoe dashed madly on, tried to stop it by seizing an over-hanging branch, only to be whipped like a shot out of the canoe and hurled ashore. On, on the vessel went, tumbling over a cascade and now, a mere wreck, with the remaining men clinging to it for dear life, it drifted swiftly downstream for several hundred yards until at last the struggling men managed to get it into shallow water. The Indians, completely unmanned, sat on the bank and wept at this calamity. But the heroic Mackenzie remained to his waist in the ice-cold water, holding the canoe until the voyageurs had got the baggage ashore. Then, half dead, he staggered to the bank.

Seldom has a leader's courage and resolution so been tried. The canoe was broken. Some of the baggage and all the musket balls had been lost. The voyageurs were wearied, discouraged, and mutinous. The Indians were completely terrified, and clamored to turn back. But Mackenzie's iron will never wavered for a moment. Wisely, he waited till the men had had a warm meal and their usual dram of rum, and then he addressed them. The greater the dangers and difficulties, he said, the greater would be the honor of reaching the Western Sea. He appealed to the pride of the French-Canadians, praising the hardihood of the men of the north. To turn back would be eternal

disgrace; to press onward would be to win undying glory. At last his words had their effect on the generous French temper of the boatmen, and, fired by his own indomitable spirit, with a shout they pledged themselves to follow wherever he might lead them. "Fortitude in Distress" was the famous motto of the North West Company. Never was it put more staunchly into practice than on this occasion. The canoe was repaired, and, surmounting obstacle after obstacle, they traversed the course of the Bad River, and on June 17th Mackenzie writes: "At length we enjoyed, after all our toil and anxiety, the inexpressible satisfaction of finding ourselves on the bank of a navigable river on the west side of the first great range of mountains."

Down this river they floated to the Fraser, reaching the main stream at the great fork where it is half a mile wide. Here the river takes a magnificent sweep to the west before it turns southwards on its course to the Sea. As they advanced, they saw many signs of the presence of natives. They found a deserted Indian house and observed smoke rising above the trees in the distance. But, though Mackenzie was very anxious to meet the Indians in order to secure guides and gain information regarding the country, it was not until June 21st that he succeeded in getting in touch with any of them. Then the reception that he was accorded was scarcely of the kind that he wished.

They were Carrier Indians. The first of the party who spied the white men set up a loud whoop to alarm his fellows, and soon the savages swarmed out of the woods,

armed with their bows and arrows and spears. Wild with excitement they danced and gesticulated on the shore, all the time brandishing their weapons and shouting out menacing cries. When the voyageurs ventured to approach they were received with a shower of arrows, none of which, by great good luck, did any damage. The friendly speeches of the interpreter were completely disregarded, so Mackenzie ordered his men to land on the opposite bank. Thus the two parties faced each other with the river rolling between.

It was of the utmost importance that these Indians should be won over. If they remained hostile they would send word of the approach of enemies down the river. Every step forward would be opposed, and the little party would be overwhelmed by the numbers of its foes. But how to win their friendship — that was the question. At last Mackenzie hit on a scheme which only a daring mind like his would have conceived.

He proposed to walk alone along the margin of the river. He took the precaution, however, of having one of his Indians slip into the woods behind him armed with two muskets. There he was to lie concealed, and, if the Carriers attacked Mackenzie, he was to fire upon them, and the others were to rush at once to their leader's assistance.

The plan worked to perfection. Mackenzie walked along the bank and openly laying aside his weapons made friendly signals to the Indians. Seeing him alone, two of them at last pushed timidly off from the other shore, but they halted a hundred yards away. The explorer

then displayed looking-glasses, beads, and other alluring trinkets as gifts, which enticed them to approach the shore, but they came with their canoe stern foremost, ready to dart away at an instant's warning. Finally Mackenzie's friendliness induced them to land. Then the interpreter came up, and soon they were all sitting side by side in friendly talk. Presently the adventurous pair returned to their companions, delighted with the gifts they had received, and it was not long before the white men were invited to cross the river, where they and their belongings were received with mingled admiration and astonishment. As the explorer distributed little gifts liberally and treated the children to the wonderful unknown luxury of lumps of sugar, he soon became very popular and his questions about the way to the sea were readily answered. The place where the great river entered "the Stinking Waters," they said, was many, many days' journey towards the mid-day sun. The current was strong and broken by innumerable falls and rapids, while towering, perpendicular banks, much higher and more rugged than any they had yet encountered, made portaging impossible. Added to these perils were those from the natives who, the Carriers said, were very fierce and hostile.

It was hardly an encouraging picture, but Mackenzie was not easily daunted. Persuading two of the Carriers to act as guides, he went stubbornly on. But the Indians, of whom he now met numerous parties, all told the same story, the truth of which was more and more confirmed by the fierce rush of the river current and the mountains,

which reared themselves ever more threateningly to southward. Why, if he wished to reach the sea, the Indians asked, did he not follow their route straight to the westward instead of descending this south-flowing river? It was not a long journey, for the sea was not far towards the setting sun. First, they ascended a stream, now called the Blackwater, which flowed from the west into the Fraser. From thence they travelled along a well-beaten path, and slept but two nights before they came to a river that flowed down to the sea. On this river were many villages, and the inhabitants had great canoes, larger even than Mackenzie's, in which they could quickly make the voyage to the coast. Always the natives told this same story of the difficulties of the river ahead and the ease with which he could travel overland to the Western Sea. What should he do?

Mackenzie pondered long over this problem. After all, his goal was the Sea, and not the exploration of this river. The river must, of course, lead to the Sea, but his own common sense told him that any stream that cut its way through such a mass of mountains as lay before him must be very difficult to navigate. Then, too, time was precious. The summer was wearing on. They had only thirty days' provisions left, and their ammunition was becoming exhausted. His one chance, he concluded, of completing the expedition that year lay in making the dash overland to the sea. So he resolved to turn north and retrace his course to the Blackwater, or West Road River, as he called it. But this was not turning back.

If the overland route should fail, he was unalterably determined to return to the Fraser and try to descend it to its mouth. This he would do, even if he had to attempt it alone, and if it cost him his life.

Having thus resolved, Mackenzie stated the situation to his men, not hiding its difficulties and perils. At the same time he told them the decision to which he had come. The response of the noble fellows was magnificent. It was worthy of such a leader. "They unanimously assured me," Mackenzie proudly records, "that they were as willing now as they had ever been to abide by my resolutions, whatever they might be, and to follow me wherever I should go."

It was Sunday, June 23rd, when this momentous decision was made. A guide was at once procured who preceded them overland to an appointed place on the Blackwater, and the canoe then faced about for the ascent of the Fraser to that point. Before turning back, however, Mackay carved the name of Alexander Mackenzie, with the date, on a tree by the river bank. On this spot, the furthest point to which Mackenzie descended the Fraser River, the North West Company later erected a fort, and in honor of the explorer called it Alexandria.

Their way back was beset with danger at every step. When the Indians saw them retracing their course up the river thus unexpectedly, they at once feared treachery and became extremely hostile. During the day the explorers had to be perpetually on their guard, and at night each stationed himself with his back to a tree and his

musket within easy reach. The voyageurs in this threatening situation again became panic stricken, and it was only Mackenzie's steady head that averted disaster. The old canoe was now quite useless, and two days had to be spent in building a new one. Then on they went again and on July 3rd reached the Blackwater. Here, to their great relief, their guide met them. He had kept his word, and he proudly boasted of his faithfulness as he strutted about in a fine new painted beaver robe. So pleased was Mackenzie that he gave him a jacket, a pair of trousers, and a handkerchief, with which reward the Indian was immensely delighted.

Next day they prepared for the overland journey. The canoe was placed bottom up on a stage made of poles, and was shaded from the sun by a covering of tree branches. Such provisions as they could not carry they cached. This was cleverly done. Two deep holes were dug, the soil and the sod being carefully placed on a large sheet spread near by. Then an oilcloth was laid in the bottom of each hole, and the articles were placed upon it. Another tarpaulin was drawn over the top, and some of the earth was thrown in and tramped down. Over this the sod was carefully replaced and on top of it a camp fire was kindled, the ashes of which completed the work of concealment. The unused earth was then cast into the river, and the men took up their packs. Each of the voyageurs took on his shoulders a burden of nearly ninety pounds in addition to his musket and ammunition, while the loads of Mackenzie and Mackay were not much lighter.

Thus encumbered, at noon on July 4th they set out on their tramp to the Sea.

Their way lay roughly along the Blackwater River. Up hill and down dale they went, through somber forest, sunny glade, and steaming marsh. Heavy laden as they were, their feet sank deep in the forest mold. When it rained, they had no shelter but an oilcloth spread above them with sticks. The moisture made the out-croppings of the rocks slippery as ice and left the underbrush so dripping wet that, even though Mackenzie went ahead to dash the drops from the branches, yet his men were all drenched to the skin. In this rough work their moccasins were soon worn out, and their clothes were torn to tatters. Footsore and exhausted utterly, when nightfall came they dropped their packs and fell asleep beside them, too tired to keep a watch.

But in the midst of all their trials, they were upborne by a growing consciousness that they were on the right path at last. The very first night they encountered an elderly Indian, who said that for men not heavily burdened it was but an eight days' journey to the sea. He had just returned thence, he said, and he displayed a lance of European manufacture which he had obtained in trade with the Coast Indians. At the first Indian camp to which they came, Mackenzie found two halfpence hung as earrings in children's ears. One was an English halfpenny of the reign of George III and the other a coin of Massachusetts bearing the date of 1787. Another party told them that that very year, at the time when the

leaves began to grow, a great wooden canoe sailed by white people had appeared at the coast. Thus, as they advanced, the evidence that they were nearing the Western Sea grew ever more convincing.

Everywhere, too, the natives received them in a friendly fashion, and thus their progress was speeded. On the 6th they came to the great main road leading to the sea, and, as it ran through a fairly level country, they made more rapid headway. Then, striking south-west from the upper branches of the Blackwater, the road led them across the Dean River and through the snowcapped passes of the Tsi-tsutl Mountains to the headwaters of the Bella Coola. It was on the banks of this stream, late at night on July 17th, that the fires of an Indian village gleaming through the dusk told the weary travellers they had reached the last stage of their journey, for here, they had been informed, they could obtain canoes in which they would be able to paddle quickly down the river to the Sea.

Some of their Indian companions had gone ahead to announce their coming, and Mackenzie was received most graciously. He was directed to the house of the Chief. It was a large dwelling, he tells us, erected on upright poles, at some distance from the ground. A broad piece of timber with steps cut in it was the stairway that led up to the entrance. Mounting this, Mackenzie entered a large apartment in which three fires blazed. At the far end several men were seated on a wide board ready to receive him, and behind them was a plank about four feet

wide which marked off the sleeping from the living room. The squaws and children had retired to bed and were now peering forth from this recess in wide-eyed wonder at their strange guests.

Shaking hands with his hosts, Mackenzie seated himself beside the Chief. The latter, as soon as all of the party had arrived, rose gravely, and, ordering mats to be placed before his guests, served them with delicious roasted salmon and other native dishes of herbs and berries. "Having been regaled with these delicacies," the explorer writes, "we laid ourselves down to rest, with no other canopy than the sky; but I never enjoyed a more sound and refreshing sleep, though I had a board for my bed and a billet for my pillow."

Next morning when they awoke at five o'clock, these kindly Indians already had a fire lit and at once served them with a delicious breakfast of salmon and fresh-picked berries. Mackenzie gives a very interesting description of these friendly Coast Indians. Their houses were mostly, like that of the Chief, constructed ten or twelve feet above the ground on stout upright posts. In one of the villages which he visited, he saw one of these houses that was one hundred and twenty feet long and forty feet wide. This was a sort of Indian apartment house, in which many families lived. Along the centre was a row of fireplaces, and along each side the house was divided by cedar planks into little rooms about seven feet square, across the entrance to which was a movable board about three feet high. These were the bedrooms

to which they retired for rest. Above, on the great beams that stretched from side to side of the house, rested strongly made wooden chests in which the natives kept provisions, utensils, and other valuables. From beam to beam were placed poles, on which roasted fish were hanging ready for use, while above all was the roof, composed of boards and bark, resting on a central ridge pole. At the top were left numerous openings for the entry of light and air and the escape of the smoke.

The chief food of the Indians was salmon, of which there were incredible numbers. With great ingenuity and labor the natives constructed embankments or weirs across the river, thus damming back the current. In these they left passages for the salmon leading directly to their fishing machines. These were great basket-like traps, fifteen feet long and four or five feet wide, made of long thin strips of wood fastened on hoops so as to let the water run through, but keep all but the smallest fish entrapped. At the foot of the fall they also fished with dipping nets. The natives were very superstitious regarding the salmon, lest anything might frighten them away. All other animal food they believed unclean. Thus, when one of the voyageurs threw a deer bone into the river, instantly a native dived, brought it up, and, having cast it into the fire, washed his hands, which he deemed to have been soiled. When Mackenzie asked for a canoe to carry his party down the river, they would provide it only on condition that no venison should be taken aboard, as they thought that might scare away the salmon from the stream.

Leaving this, the Friendly Village, as he called it, Mackenzie now embarked, with seven natives manning the canoes. "I had imagined," he says, "that the Canadians who accompanied me were the most expert canoemen in the world, but they were very inferior to these people, as they themselves acknowledged." So skillful were these Indians that they could take a canoe leaping over the weirs without shipping a drop of water. Proceeding downstream at a great pace, in two and a half hours they came to another settlement.

Two Chiefs of the Coast Indians of British Columbia.

It was a larger village of more than two hundred people. Immediately the strangers appeared all was in an uproar of fear and excitement, but Mackenzie walked calmly into the midst of them, and soon they laid aside their weapons and crowded around to examine him with the greatest curiosity. At last he became so tightly wedged in the crowd that he could scarcely stir hand or foot. Then an elderly chief made his way with dignity through the throng and embraced the explorer, while his son, who

followed him, placed on Mackenzie's shoulders a magnificent cloak of otter skin. The latter responded with the gift of a blanket to the young chief and of a pair of scissors to his father. He explained to him how these might be used for trimming his beard, which was of great length, and to this purpose the Indian at once applied them.

In the great lodge of the chief a banquet was now spread with all due ceremony. It consisted largely of roast salmon and sweet cakes made from the inner rind of the hemlock tree. These were dipped in salmon oil and found to be very delicious. For three hours the feast lasted, and then Mackenzie made a tour of the village. The great totem poles of these people showed considerable skill in sculpture, as did also the carved posts and rafter ends of some of the houses. With great pride the Chief showed Mackenzie his big cedar canoe, which was forty-five feet long. It was painted black with white figures of different kinds of fish on it, and the gunwale fore and aft was inlaid with the teeth of the sea otter. In this canoe, he said, ten years before he had been kindly received by white men sailing along the coast in two large vessels. These were probably the ships of Captain Cook.

Mackenzie was now impatient to be again on his way, but his new friends were very reluctant to part with him until they saw him set up his instruments to observe the sun. This was magic. At once they fell into a great panic and begged him to desist lest he should frighten the salmon from their river. Immediately now the canoe for which he had asked was provided, and they were speeded on their way.

Sir Alexander Mackenzie Reaches the Pacific.—From the drawing by Jefferys, by permission of the publishers of "Makers of Canada"

They were now nearing the end of their long quest. The river soon began to divide into many channels and the salty tang of the sea was in the air. When they camped that night they saw in the distance that inlet of the Pacific now called North Bentinck Arm, and next morning at eight o'clock, July 20th, 1793, the prow of their canoe began to glide through the salt water of the Sea. It was ebb tide and the seaweed lay bare along the shore. Seals aired themselves on the rocks and dived into the deep cool waters, while porpoises bobbed up and down at play, and overhead white eagles screamed and flew low in a cloudy sky.

Crossing the entrance to South Bentinck Arm, Mackenzie landed on Point Menzies. A little later he proceeded further westward along Burke Channel, and there waited for the sky to clear so that he could observe the sun and fix his position on the coast. In this he at last succeeded. "I now mixed up some vermilion in melted grease," he says, "and inscribed in large characters on the south-east face of the rock this brief memorial—'Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada, by land, the 22nd of July, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three.'" Such was the finding of the far-famed Western Sea.

But even in the very hour of triumph danger and disaster threatened. For two days they had been followed about by an ever increasing throng of natives, whose attitude grew more and more menacing. They were led by a swaggering fellow who said that white men in a great canoe who had recently been in the bay had fired on his

friends and beaten him with a sword, and he seemed bent on revenge. Mackenzie's Indians and even the voyageurs had grown terror-stricken at this situation and had implored him to turn back now that he had reached the Sea. But all the savages in the world would not have turned Mackenzie back until he had made the observations necessary to establish his position on the coast. Now, however, he could face about with honor and, retracing his way to the mouth of the Bella Coola, he landed and approached a village. But the hostile natives had preceded them, and suddenly a horde of Indians sprang out upon him, brandishing knives and with murder in their eyes. For the moment Mackenzie was alone and in deadly peril. He levelled his musket, which halted them, for they knew the power of firearms. One, however, creeping up silently, seized him from behind. With a struggle Mackenzie disengaged himself, but in so doing lost his cloak and his hat. Then the arrival of his own people sent his assailants scattering into the woods. But Mackenzie's blood was now up and he was resolved to teach them a lesson. Marching on boldly, he took possession of the village and refused to give it up, until the cowed Indians had restored to him his hat and cloak and all other goods which they had stolen, and had given his party a supply of fish.

Having thus resolutely dealt with his enemies, the victorious explorer named the place Rascals' Village and went on his way without further molestation. He rested again at Friendly Village, and then crossing the mountains, reached the Fraser on August 4th, exactly one month after

his departure overland for the sea. August 15th found them again on the waters of the Bad River. Two days later they launched their canoes on the Parsnip, and on August 24th Mackenzie was hailed with rejoicing at the fort on the Peace River from which he had started early in May. "Here," says Mackenzie, "my voyages of discovery terminate. Their toils and their dangers, their solicitudes and their sufferings have not been exaggerated in my description. I received, however, the reward of my labors for they were crowned with success."

Success! Though the modest explorer might thus simply put it, that is far too mild a word with which to picture the worth of his achievements. He had traced a mighty unknown river, whose basin was an empire, from its source in the heart of the Rocky Mountains to its far-off delta in the Arctic Ocean. Through countless perils and hardships he had won his way to that Western Sea which for three hundred years had been the goal sought by the most daring spirits of two great races — and sought till then in vain. Where Cartier, Hudson, La Salle, La Vérendrye, and others had failed, he had won victory. It was no wonder, then, that when the ragged explorer emerged from the untracked wilderness which he had conquered, he leaped quickly into a foremost place among the fur traders of Canada, while the king, with justice, accorded him that honor of knighthood which in olden days was the guerdon of brave deeds. But greatest of all his rewards was that for all time he will be remembered as the one whose valor and endurance opened up the first pathway across North America from sea to sea.